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Chapter 13. Joyabaj



13.1. Introduction

13.1.1. Setting

The countryside around Joyabaj is some of the most beautiful in Guatemala. Coming by bus from Santa Cruz del Quiché, capital of the Department of Quiché, one passes through rolling countryside, much of it used for ranching. Indeed, the cowboy hat is the most common men's headgear in Joyabaj. Continuing past Joyabaj and traveling west towards Rabinal, the increasingly mountainous and rugged terrain is thinly populated with homesteads and milpas of subsistence farmers. The Joyabaj *cabecera* has grown around a ridge top, and the older part of town is thus a narrow strip along a steep ravine or *barranca*. This central area of the city is considered largely *Ladino* now, but it is flanked by *barrios* that are almost exclusively K'iche': La Democracia above the town centre to the west, and La Libertad below the town center to the east. Current growth seems to be most concentrated in La Libertad, which continually expands toward the east and in which adobe houses with wood post verandas are rapidly

being replaced with two story brick houses sporting a garage with an SUV, a second story balcony, and rooftop terrace for laundry and pet dog.



Baile de la Conquista in the *cancha* or church plaza during the Joyabaj *feria*. *Toritos de fuego* at the left, the preserved façade of the church behind, and the *Palo Volador* above. 2012.

13.1.2. The Fiesta Patronal

Of the colonial church at the heart of Joyabaj, only the façade survived the devastating earthquake of 1976. Behind this façade is a completely rebuilt church. This church dominates an unusually large central plaza that houses a regular market. During the *feria*, however, market stalls are cleared for festival dances and processions.

The patron saint of Joyabaj is the Virgin of the Assumption, known locally as *La Virgen del Tránsito*. Her feast day is August 15, which is the last day of the octavo of the *feria* that begins on August 8. The combination of prosperity and tradition leads to a significant number of dance teams performing for each of the *feria* days. In some years there are two *Conquista* teams and two or three teams performing the related *El Torito* and *Los Compadritos*. In addition, the *Palo Volador* is regularly performed using a 20 meter high pole. I have also seen, simultaneously in the plaza, the *Mexicanos* and *Venados* dances. All of these groups also perform at the *cofradías*, and in fact at the same *cofradía* at the same time,

taking up the streets around it.¹ In these circumstances, the *Toritos* and *Compadritos* groups especially use amplification which makes it difficult to hear the *Conquista* music.

Each dance group arranges a *posada* where they can store their *trajes* and masks as well as change to and from regular clothing. For those dancers who come from the surrounding *aldeas*—a majority in the case of the *Conquista* dance team—they also sleep at the *posada* along with their wives and children. The wives then cook on the roof terrace, each at a separate fire.

13.1.3. Conquista Dance Teams and My Involvement



Francisco Ordoñez Alonzo (Don Chico), the author, and José Manuel Gutiérrez. 2012.

As there was no *Conquista* dance in Joyabaj in 2008,² I have been following performances in this *municipio* only from 2009 to 2012. In 2009, two groups performed the *Conquista* simultaneously, one led by Domingo Castro and the other by Domingo Gutiérrez. In subsequent years there has been only one group, led by Domingo Castro in 2010 and 2011 and by Francisco Ordoñez Alonzo (Don Chico) and his cousin Miguel Pablo Hernández in 2012. In 2009 I attached myself to Domingo Gutiérrez's group, following them regularly,

and helping to carry furniture. Though we did not speak much, I was still warmly welcomed, initially by José Manuel Gutiérrez, one of the Alvarados. In 2011, noticing then and in previous years that Don Chico was the outstanding performer, I invited him to supper in return for an interview. I was delighted to hear that he would lead the group as *autor* in 2012, and he was happy to further my research. Don Chico even called me in October, 2011, to tell me that the group had carried out its first rehearsal. For the 2012 *feria* I made a substantial monetary contribution as a means of supporting Don Chico. As a result, my relations with Don Chico and some other dancers, particularly Don Manuel, were especially close. We three made plans to share *autor* responsibilities for 2013, which would give my contributions more official recognition. However, Don Chico fell ill during the 2012 *feria* and his health

¹ The *Palo Volador* is not set up at *cofradías*; rather the team, dressed as monkeys in black and angels in red, dance in the *cofradías*.

² Diane Nelson (personal communication 2009) suggested that this lapse in 2008 was likely due to the operation in the US of mass imprisonment and deportation of many undocumented workers from Joyabaj. Nelson also suggested that the cause might have been the collapse of a pyramid scheme in which many members of the community suffered huge losses. Perhaps a combination of the two factors explains the *Conquista's* brief absence in this community.

declined significantly over the next year, so that in 2013 he was not able to dance at all, much less act as *autor*. Domingo Castro took over the reins again but Don Manuel declined as well to participate due to disagreements in participation schedules for dancers. For these and other reasons, I did not attend the *feria* in 2013.

13.2. Preliminaries and Participation in Other Public Rituals and Events

13.2.1. Preparations and Rehearsals

As elsewhere, it is the responsibility of the *autor* to enlist dancers for the coming year's fair. Those dancers who agree to take part usually make a seven-year commitment to the saint to do so. Carrying out this commitment brings health and prosperity, whereas breaking the commitment can bring down the saint's retribution.

According to Don Chico, the following year's dance team is composed as much as possible during the second *octavo* of the preceding year's *feria*, in late August or early September. At that time the *maestro*, Benito Ajanel, distributes copies of their parts to prospective dancers for memorization. Don Chico explained that there is no public announcement in the church of a dance team's commitment to perform the *Conquista* in honour of the patron in the following *feria* because the Catholic church has little interest in the traditional dances.

Rehearsals begin, if possible, in October. Rehearsals have to accommodate participants' absence for work on the coastal plantations and in the US, necessary to earn money for, among other things, rental of the *traje* which is unusually expensive in Joyabaj. In preparation for the 2012 *feria*, the first *ensayo* was held on October 24, 2011. *Trajes* are then ordered from the *morería* after the second rehearsal, in March or April, according to Don Chico.

13.2.2. Welcoming the Masks and Last Rehearsal

In 2012, the ceremony to welcome the *trajes* and the final *ensayo* were combined, as they are at San Cristóbal. Due to *maestro* Don Benito's unavailability in early August, these events took place on July 20–22.

This ceremonial event took place on July 20 at the home of the *mayordomo* (*autor*), Francisco Ordoñez Alonzo (Don Chico). He had prepared the room in his house that holds an altar table by spreading the floor with pine needles. The *Chuchkajaw* hired for the event was his father-in-law.



Don Chico figures out the outstanding charges as he collects the costumes at the Joyabaj morería. Mercedes Malecio Aguilar, the morera, is at the back in the pink blouse. 2012.

The events of this day began earlier, with a visit to the *morería* in Joyabaj to pick up *trajes* and masks. At this time the *autor* must pay outstanding rental fees for dancers who have not themselves paid in full for their *trajes*. After the *morería*, Don Chico stopped at the shop where candles, incense and *bombas* for *costumbres* are sold. Picnic supplies were also purchased at the *Dispensa Familiar* as the *mayordomo* must provide food for all the dancers, in this case over a three day period.

After traveling an hour by pickup we reached Don Chico's house which is in the *caserío* Talaxcoc of the aldea Chuaquenun, and which is situated on the side of a mountain overlooking a valley covered with luxuriant foliage broken by *milpas*. Other performers gathered and all went immediately into the altar room to kneel and pray and then to eat lunch. At 2 pm, when lunch was over, Don Chico set off a *bomba* in his patio to welcome the masks and *trajes* and begin the ceremonial event. Costumes were then distributed to the dancers. Soon the *Chuchkajaw* began incensing the altar with *pom* (copal), after which he went outside and incensed the patio to be used for dancing, then returned. The last official rehearsal then began. Dancers did not wear their *traje* but did use the *platos*. Don Benito read the text to the dancers when they did not know it, but did not always give them time to repeat each phrase. The alternate dancers who perform K'iche' characters but were not performing in this rehearsal were at this time busy sewing ostrich feathers to the headdress panels and attaching these to the tin headdress construction. After the rehearsal, participants again entered the altar room where they were served a shot of *guaro* (liquor) in rank order of the personages they perform. This ranking begins with the *maestros*, then Rey K'iche' and members of the court, the *Caciques* according to their internal ranking, and then the Spaniards. Participants then ate dinner in the altar room.



The Chuchkajaw in the altar room of Don Chico's house in Talaxcoc, with the altar table set up for the ceremony. 2012



Masks placed on the table next to the altar. 2012. Court group at the back, *Caciques* and priests in the middle row, and Spaniards in front. 2012.

The evening *cruzada* ceremony then began around 9 pm and lasted until midnight. The ceremony began when a large table was brought into the altar room. Upon being called up in the rank order of their personages, each dancer placed his mask on the table and placed his offerings of candles and/or incense in baskets in front of the table. However

veladoras, the candles in drinking glass-shaped containers, were put on the altar table and the mask table. Two bottles of *guaro* were placed in the basket with the candles. When all the masks had been handed in, they were arranged according to ethnic groups: K'iche' versus Spanish.

For an hour, the *Chuchkajaw* and the two co-autores, Francisco Ordoñez (Don Chico) and his cousin, Miguel Pablo Hernández, gave talks about expectations of dancers to show up at the dressing place on time (4 am) during the feria and encouragement to contribute Q140 each to the cost of the musicians. The *Chuchkajaw* then prayed while lighting the *veladoras* on the altar table and incensing the masks. For his prayer for protection and success of the group, the *Chuchkajaw* asked for and recited the name of each participant from the *maestro* down through the ranks of dancers.

At 10:45 all dancers went outside, some carrying the baskets of incense, candles, and liquor. They were called in rank order to form into a double line. The *chirimiista* and *tamborista* then began playing and the performers began dancing in the same double lines, directed by the *Chuchkajaw* holding the censer. They first danced a counter-clockwise circuit of the dance ground, stopping half way to kneel and pray. Then they danced so that they formed a diagonal across the dance ground and knelt and prayed again. They rose and danced again so that they formed another diagonal crossing the first, upon which they knelt and prayed again. They reversed direction and knelt to pray along the same diagonal. They then rose and danced another counter-clockwise circuit as those carrying the baskets of *Costumbre* offering materials placed them in the centre. Thus began the danced *cruzada*, typical of the last rehearsal in other *municipios* as well.



Participants line up on a diagonal in the patio to kneel and pray. 2012.



Wood troughs in cross-shaped arrangement holding burning candles and incense. 2012.

The dancers then arranged themselves in groups (court, *Caciques*, Spaniards) and formed into lines on the appropriate sides of the dance ground as the *Chuchkajaw* arranged the cruciform offering fire. A series of hollow wooden troughs were placed in the centre of the dance ground in a crossed arrangement, then filled with the incense balls and topped with the candle offerings. When the candles were lit to start the fire, dancers received a drink of *guaro* and a cigarette in rank order. The dancers then began dancing in place as the fire blazed to consume candles and incense

balls. A *bomba* was set off about 11:15 and liquor was offered to the fire in the four directions. Dancers continued dancing in place until the fire had burned itself out, ending the ceremony very close to midnight. All then retired for the night.

While the acts of this afternoon and evening followed a general ceremonial procedure also observed in other localities, further ceremonial activities took place over the next two days, July 21–22. Custom requires sanctification and protection also of the *mayordomos* (*autores*). Therefore on July 21, the Conquest dance was planned to be performed in *traje* twice in its entirety at Francisco Ordoñez's house



Women of Don Chico's family and others, prepares *paches* for the feast. 2012.

in Talaxcoc, and then on July 22, two times at the home of co-*autor* Miguel Pablo Hernandez in Ojo de Agua across the valley. The dances began at 5 am in Don Chico's house and at 4 am at Don Miguel's house, with dancers and musicians arising an hour earlier to prepare. On both days, masks were not worn until dawn, shortly before 6 am. Don Benito coached the dancers as well in all four of these performances. One particular ceremonial act noted was that on the morning of July 21, Don Chico incensed the four corners of the dance ground on his patio and then, standing in the centre, incensed to the four

directions. As usual, *bombas* were set off at the beginning and end of each performance. On both days also, several women, some belonging to the two *autores*' families, were occupied in cooking for about

60 people. Marking the ceremonial occasion, the feature dish on the July 20, was *paches* steamed in plantain leaves.

13.2.3. Opening Rituals

The *Conquista* dance group was involved in two rituals on August 7 in 2012, the day before the *feria* opened. The first was a ritual presentation to the patron, the Virgen del Tránsito. The dance group traveled in pickups from the posada to the patron's *cofradía*, in this case a room rented for the purpose in the house of Don Chico's mother in the La Democracia *barrio* of Joyabaj. According to Don Chico, normally the *autor's* residence is in a different place than the *cofradía*, so the dancers normally walk from his house to the *cofradía* carrying their *veladoras* (candles in glass).

When all were assembled at the house, two *bombas* were set off and the dancers entered the *cofradía* room in rank order. On the far wall was the icon of the Virgen del Tránsito, situated in the usual glass-fronted case, draped with what I gather to be imitation pearls, as well as local textiles and a cellphone. Her case was flanked by two standards with carvings of the patron and attached leafy branches. Also filling the wall area were arrangements of both real and plastic flowers. A railing separated the area in front of the icon from the rest of the room. There, on two large tables placed on axis with the icon, were a myriad of lit *veladoras*, making the heat in the room intense. A large table at the side in *feria* days would be used for serving food or for dancers to place their headdresses. At this time the large "town drum" was placed on the table and dancers deposited their hats on the table as well. Between the table and the side wall was a bench on which musicians and *cofrades* sat at various times during the *feria*.

The dancers' ritual in the *cofradía* at this time involved kneeling in rank order and advancing one by one to the patron saint's icon. The *Chuchkajaw* was seated just outside the railing, where an entrance provided access to the patron's case, praying and incensing the ceremonial area. As each dancer reached him, the *Chuchkajaw* asked what part they dance, took their *veladora*, prayed over it, and handed it back. Each dancer then moved up to the patron's icon with their *veladora* and prayed,



Consecration of the dancers in the *cofradía* of the Virgen del Tránsito. The Chuchkajaw sits at right. 2012.

dedicating their offering to the Virgen, Each then rose, came out a side passage in the railing, lit their *veladora* and left it on the table with the others. When all dancers completed their offering, the *Chuchkajaw* lit a candle then opened a beer bottle and poured a libation over some of the flowers. This ended the participants' ceremonial dedication of their dance to the *municipio* patron. Participants then ate lunch.



Part II, Ajitz performs divination while Ambassadors dance. August 7 performance in street in front of the *posada*. 2012.

In the afternoon, dancers gathered again at the *posada* and changed into their *trajes* and masks for a full dance performance in the street. This performance is designed to honour and sanctify the *posada* as a place in which the *trajes* and masks are kept. There dancers dress each morning, thus undergoing the process of embodying an ancestral entity, and each afternoon relinquishing that entity as they return to

everyday clothing. Thus I see the *posada* dance as another stage in the necessary transformation of *trajes* and masks from *morería* merchandise to powerful supernatural and ancestral entities—what Cook (2000) has called *primeros* or founders of human society.

13.2.4. Changing Dance Venues, August 8-12.

During the eight days of the *feria*, except for very few breaks for parade and procession, the *Conquista* is danced twice daily, primarily in *cofradías* but also in the church plaza. Performances are not shortened for the *cofradía* venue as they usually are at Cunén. The schedule thus normally includes two complete performances per day, each lasting 5–6 hours in general but up to 7 hours. In the morning, dancers gather and begin dressing at the *posada* at 4 am and are expected to be dancing at the appropriate venue at 5 am. Women of the dancers' families arrive around 7 with breakfast so the performers take a half-hour break. The morning performance finishes between 11 and 12. After a short lunch break, the afternoon dance is held in a different location, and this often continues without any break at all until its termination. *Bombas* are launched at the beginning and ending of both morning and afternoon performances.

As elsewhere, movement of the dancers and musicians through the city is accomplished in a regular, organized, and meaningful processional format. Whether in procession between the *posada* and dance venue, in a school *desfile* (parade), or accompanying a saint in religious procession, the format is



Usual processional format, in *desfile*. 2012.

consistent. Musicians stand at the back of the group, with members of the court directly in front of them. Spaniards are arranged in a line on the court's right hand, and *Caciques* in a line on the left, with the leaders closest to the musicians. *Ajitz* and *Chiquito* are placed in the middle and near or at the front. While Spaniards merely walk, the other three groups dance. The only difference from the staging arrangement on the

dance ground is the processional placement of the Rey K'iche' and his court with the musicians, rather than at the opposite end. Thus in procession they recreate most of the spatial arrangement of staging in the dance ground, reinforcing the understanding that the meaning of the four personage groups is defined by their relations to each other. All of these traits are fairly consistent among the different *municipios* where I have studied the *Conquista*. The one unique feature I noted in Joyabaj processions is that Tekum and Rey K'iche' perform their paired dance beside each other, alternating back-to-back and front-to-front, while other dancers merely face forward.

Prayers both precede and follow each performance except those held in the church plaza on the last days of the feria. The first performance of the feria, on the morning of August 8, is also held in the church plaza, called the "*cancha*". But when the dancers arrive at 5 am the church is locked, so they pray in front of the atrium steps. After the morning performance, they enter the church to pray. On most other days, performances are held at *cofradías*. The standard procedure involves only a brief prayer in the *cofradía* before the dance. Often dancers, in usual rank order, merely file past the icon of the *cofradía's* patron saint.

This procedure in the *cofradía* is much more elaborate when the performance is finished. Again performers enter in rank order, but this time they kneel to pray, having left their headdresses on the table since hats are not to be worn inside. Two highest ranking *cofrades* or male officers of the *cofradía* then kneel and pray before the icon, holding the liquor and cigarettes to be distributed to



Cofrade of Sacred Heart Cofradía offers liquor to the Conquista co-autores. 2012



Cofrade of Sacred Heart Cofradía offers cigarettes to the Conquista co-autores. 2012

performers. They rise and hand these gifts to the two *Conquista autores*, who likewise kneel and pray with them before the icon. Then the two *gracejos*, Ajitz and Quirijol, are called up and handed the liquor and cigarettes, after which they too kneel and pray. It is then up to Ajitz to distribute the liquor and Quirijol the cigarettes, to each participant, in rank order. They begin with the two *cofrades*, then the *Chuckkajaw* if he is present, then the *autores*, the musicians if they have entered the *cofradía*, and finally the dancers in usual rank order. As collaborator, I am also offered these things. After all have received their gifts, Ajitz, Quirijol, and the two *autores* again kneel to pray before the *cofradía's* icon.



The gracejos, Ajitz and Quirijol, distribute the cigarettes and liquor to dancers. 2014

I have only recorded the precise order of *cofradía* venues for the 2012 feria, but was told that this was a standard sequence, moving down in rank from top to bottom, step by step. As noted, the first performance of the *feria*, on the morning of August 8, takes place in the Church plaza and dedicated to the patron Virgen del Tránsito. The afternoon performance on August 8 takes place at the *cofradía* of the same patron. Then follow three *cofradías* associated with Jesucristo: 1) On the morning of August 9, at the *cofradía* of Jesús Sacramentado; 2) on the afternoon of August 9, at the *cofradía* of Santa Cruz (Holy Cross); and 3) on the afternoon of August 10, at the *cofradía* *Sagrado Corazón de Jesús* (Sacred Heart of Jesus), also known as *Jesús Nazareno*. Intervening among these is a parade on the morning of August 10 to be described later. The next series of three *cofradía* venues is associated with lesser saints: 1) on the morning of August 11, at the *cofradía* of the Virgen del Rosario; 2) on the afternoon of

August 11, at the *cofradía* of San Marcos; and 3) on the morning of August 12 at the *cofradía* of San Juan Bautista.

The location of each *cofradía* is signalled by an arch of leafy branches around the doorway facing the street. If the entrance to the actual *cofradía* room is removed from the street and entered from an inner patio, this entrance is decorated similarly. The shrine rooms in other *cofradías* are generally organized like that of the *Virgen del Tránsito* described above: a back wall containing the case of the saint icon and sometimes other flanking cases with icons, carved standards wound with leafy branches flanking the main case, abundant real and plastic flowers along the wall, and often a railing separating this wall area from the main part of the room, which contains a large table.



Cofradía Nazareno. 2009.

These *cofradías* are distributed largely through the two main *barrios*: La Libertad to the east and below the central core; and La Democracia to the west and above the core. The *cofradía* within the core is Santa Cruz: according to Don Chico, its members are from an aldea so the *municipio* allows them to use a civic building near the market, in the region known as the Old Cemetery. In traversing these *cofradías* over the days of the *feria*, it was clear that some homesteads house *cofradías* year after year. I asked Don Chico about one in particular that I had visited two years in a row, and how the particular *cofradía* housed in that homestead had changed. In this case, the homestead that housed the *cofradía* Rosario in 2011 housed the *cofradía* Jesús Sacramento in 2012, so that the patriarch of the homestead had clearly moved up in the religious hierarchy.

As the performance at *cofradía* San Juan Bautista completes the circuit of major *cofradías*, the next three performances, on the afternoon of August 12, the Morning of August 13, and the afternoon of August 13, all take place at the *cofradía* of the patron, the *Virgen del Tránsito*. There is much more activity at the patron's *cofradía* on these days, including setting off the personal fireworks, launched on a bamboo pole decorated with coloured plastic ribbons. At this time also officers of the various *cofradías* are all assembled at the *cofradía* of the patron where they will pass two nights and two days in vigil, without any sleep whatsoever. Another change at this time is that instead of rewarding dance teams with *guaro* and cigarettes, the *cofradía* now supplies *atole* spiced with chili, served in a gourd cup. This drink is served to all visitors, at any time they wish it.

On August 12 the patron's icon is taken out of its case and set within an arbour on the exterior of the *cofradía* house, against its outer wall. The icon is flanked by elaborate flower arrangements, accompanied by musicians playing a violin on one side and a three-man marimba on the other.

Though very close to each other, these two instruments play completely different music simultaneously. Inside the *cofradía*, *cofrades* sit holding their silver staffs, maintaining the vigil.



The *Virgen del Tránsito* set up outside the *cofradía*. Here members of the *Conquista* dance team join other worshippers. 2012.

On August 13, the icon of the *Virgen del Tránsito* is moved again, onto an *anda*, within a wicker container in the shape of a large rounded arch, decorated with abundant peacock feathers as well as plaster angels, framed mirrors, and framed pictures. Among the pictures, those on the central axis include images of the Madonna and Child as well as two images of Santiago de los Caballeros. Beneath these is the rectangular opening into which is placed the

Virgin's icon. Two men can sit inside this arched container, one on either side of the Virgin. Each is there to pull on the ropes, one ringing chimes on the interior, and the other twirling a metallic sunburst near the apex of the arch.

This *anda* is set within a two-story high scaffolding, open on the front, but decorated on the other sides and top with broad-leafed branches. Large numbers of people can approach the *anda* to pray and leave monetary offerings, placing coins in a plate below the icon or placing bills between the icon's fingers. From this enclosure the *anda* with the Virgin departs and returns, including what was described as a visit to the old cemetery on the afternoon of August 13. As the *Conquista* did not join in this procession, but continued dancing in the street before the *cofradía*, I did not witness it. But after the icon was returned to the scaffolding area, the acrobatic members of the *Baile del Venado* (Deer Dance), specifically those performing as lions, tigers, and monkeys, began climbing over the scaffolding. The old man and old woman from the same dance also performed in character, aiming their rifles at the marauding animals.



Virgen del Tránsito in her *anda*, placed within a leafy enclosure. 2012.

13.2.5. *Feria* Processions, August 14-15

During the final two days of the *feria's* first *octavo*, August 14 and 15, the *feria* reaches its climax. On these days, the *Conquista* and other dance teams take part in processional celebrations in different ways that merit more detailed description.

The purpose of the processions on August 14 is to gather the *cofradía* saints into the church, bringing the Virgen del Tránsito last, to be greeted by the other saints. The six dance teams are divided into two groups of three teams each. One group will accompany the saints from *cofradías* in La Libertad Barrio, and the other group from La Democracia. In 2012, the *Conquista* dance team was assigned to the La Libertad group.



Gathering of the saints in *barrio* La Libertad. 2012.

The morning of the 14th began with the usual 5 am performance opening in the Church plaza. At about 8:30, *cofrades* passed by, accompanied by a town drum and *pito* (cane flute), so dance performances were halted and the three dance teams in our group followed them down to La Libertad in the usual processional formation. Saints were gathered from five *cofradías* in ascending rank, beginning with the minor *cofradía* of San Miguelito (the Archangel) who is the patron of the *Palo Volador* dance team, members of which dress either as monkeys or as angels. We then went on, in sequence, to the Virgen del Rosario, San Marcos, San Juan Bautista, and lastly Jesús Sacramentado. Don Chico said that Jesús Sacramentado, the most important of the lower *barrio* *cofradía* saints, must always be the last to enter the church and the first to greet the Virgen del Tránsito when she arrives. He said that some people believe that this arrangement is because Jesús Sacramentado is the husband of the Virgen del Tránsito, but he does not believe this because he has read the Bible. However, this notion is not unusual. By

comparison, in the *Semana Santa* ritual drama in Santiago Atitlán, Jesucristo mates over the course of a whole night with María Andolor in order to reproduce himself, a concept closely tied to Indigenous Maya religion and views of the renovation of the Sun and Maize.

At each of these *cofradía* visits, the *Conquista* dancers took up the performance where they had left off at the last venue and continued while *cofrades* brought the saint icon out of the *cofradía* and carefully attached it to its *anda*. The exception was the *cofradía* Rosario, in which the secondary icon of the Virgen de Candelaria was brought out and placed on a second *anda*. At each *cofradía* also, performers were treated to gourds of *atole* spiced with chili. Beating on the town drum became a signal to move in procession with the accumulated saints to the next *cofradía*.



Toritos de Fuego. 2012.

When all of the La Libertad saints were gathered, the *Conquista* and the other two dance teams danced with them in procession up to the church plaza. There the saints entered the church, while the *Conquista* and other dance teams began their afternoon performances in the plaza. In addition to the dance teams in the plaza, the group performing with the *toritos de fuego* along with a group of persons with decorated personal fireworks,

danced in a circle in a large part of the plaza. The *toritos de fuego* in Joyabaj are gaily decorated with coloured ribbons, enhancing the rhythm of their dance. The fireworks on the *toritos de fuego*, I was told, will not be set off until the second *octavo*.

Around 3 pm on August 14, the *cofrades* and three church officials, carrying standards in the form of a cross and two candle holders, emerged from the church and formed into a procession leading to the *cofradía* of the Virgen del Tránsito. The procession includes two large “town” drums, one accompanied by the *pito* and the other by the *chirimía*. At the *cofradía*, the *Conquista* group resumed the dance, performing an abbreviated version that skips most of the intervening material between the Spanish entrada and the battle scene. Other dances are also performing in the street before the *cofradía*, and the *Baile del Venado* animals are again climbing the scaffolding around the *anda*, indiscriminately tearing off leaves.

About 4:30 pm, a procession formed with the *anda* of the Virgen del Tránsito accompanied by the six dance teams, male and female *cofradía* officers, and populace. Again two men are in the *anda* enclosure, ringing the chimes and twirling the sunburst. When the procession arrived at the church

plaza, around 5:15, the *Conquista* resumed its performance there. Meanwhile the Virgin's *anda* continued through the throngs in the plaza, making several *vuelatas* on its way to the church, especially in the *atrio* or porch area. Finally the *anda* was taken inside and to the front. When it was set down, the priest took over, asking the congregation to kneel and pray, and thus beginning the mass.



Virgen del Tránsito in procession to the church. 2009.

In the plaza, the *Conquista* finished the performance while the *toritos de fuego* circled and

workmen finished tying fireworks on the metal scaffolding known as the *Castillo*. After supper, I was able to watch the firework display, which was not inserted into as formal an event as it was in Cunén.

On both the morning and afternoon of August 15, the *Conquista* again danced in the church plaza, as the Virgen del Tránsito and other *cofradía* icons are all in the church. Don Chico explained in the morning that the mass taking place in the church involved the handover of *cofradía* emblems and leadership to the *cofrades* who will function in the ceremonial year now beginning.



The Virgen del Tránsito re-enters the church. 2012.

The main event of August 15 occurred during the afternoon performance of the *Conquista*, though the *Conquista* dancers did not take part. Around 12:30 all of the saints emerged from the church for a circuit procession, counter-clockwise, that takes place in the church block and a large adjoining block. In earlier days there would have been chapels marking the four corners of this processional route, as still exist in Cunén. At the head of the procession was the Santa Cruz, and at the back the Virgen del Tránsito and lastly Jesús Sacramentado, her "mate." Returning to the church at the end of this circuit takes the procession through an archway between civic structures on the west side of the church plaza. As the *anda* entered the church plaza, preceded by the *Venado* and *Palo Volador* dancers, and as it made its way through

the throngs, it performed several *vueltas*. As the *anda* reached the church, a loudspeaker announced the dates of the coming *octavo*, when the patron saint and the other saints would be taken for the first time to their new *cofradía* homes. Finally, the Virgin re-enters the church through an arched doorway the same shape and not much larger than her *anda*.

13.2.6. The Second *Octavo*

Due to teaching obligations, I have not been able to attend the second *Octavo* when the *Conquista* again performs and participates in processions with the saints and the Virgen del Tránsito. However, Don Chico provided me with a brief description.

According to Don Chico, the *octavo* always lasts from a Sunday to a Thursday, though the *Conquista* begins dancing on the Saturday preceding its official beginning. All dance groups perform in both morning and afternoon on the Saturday. The morning venue is the *Calvario* chapel and the afternoon venue is the *cofradía* San Pedro in the centre of the city, in the district known as the Old Cemetery.

On Sunday, the *Conquista* and other dance groups perform in the morning in the church plaza. In the afternoon, they participate in the processions that carry the lesser saints to their new *cofradía* locations—as before, splitting into two groups for the two *barrios*, La Libertad and La Democracia. The saints will be deposited in their new *cofradías* in reverse order to that in which they were taken on the August 14. When this process is finished, the *Conquista* and other dance teams will resume performing in the church plaza.

In the evening on the Sunday, beginning around 5–6 pm, *bombas* and *cohetes* will mark the opening of the procession that takes the Virgen del Tránsito on the beginning of a three-day path through the *cabecera*, visiting those homes and businesses that desire her blessing. Although the Virgen will travel through the night, dancers normally rest each night, then resume accompanying her in the morning. Each time the Virgen stops, the dancers will take up their performance where they had left it off at the previous stop.

By Thursday morning, the Virgen del Tránsito has reached her new *cofradía*. There the *Conquista* and other dance teams perform for her. This performance ends the *octavo* and thus also ends the liminal period of transition for the community and its saints. The *autor* will hand out parts to those dancers continuing in the next year. Dancers will return their masks and *trajes* to the *morería* and leave the *posada* for their homes.

13.2.7. *Desfile* on August 10

I was told that school parades or *desfiles* occur on both August 10 and August 11, the first including children from schools in the *aldeas* who are thus primarily K'iche', and the second including children from schools in the town or *cabecera* of Joyabaj *municipio*, and thus including a significant *Ladino* population. Dance teams participate in the first of these parades, accompanied by male *cofrades* with their staffs topped by silver medallions and with bright local textiles slung over their shoulders. Also participating are the *alcaldes comunitarios*, the members of the Indigenous government assembly or *auxiliatura*. On August 10, the *Conquista* team began dancing in the *cancha* or church plaza and then joined the forming parade when the *alcaldes* did. The *Conquista* and other dance teams preceded the school groups, walking from La Libertad *barrio* through the town centre into La Democracia. At this point the *Conquista* left the parade and prepared for the afternoon performance at a *cofradía* in La Democracia.

13.3. Conventions

13.3.1. Costumes and *Morería*

Joyabaj has had its own *morería* for about fifty years. According to current *morera* Mercedes Malecio Aguilar, it was founded by Pascual Pérez who had learned his trade in Santa Cruz del Quiché. An eight-minute documentary on K'iche' festivals that focuses on Joyabaj and was filmed in 1968 shows costumes that are entirely within the style of San Cristóbal.³ Either Pérez was at that time producing *trajes* in a style learned elsewhere, or the foundation of the Joyabaj *morería* occurred a little later than Doña Mercedes reports.

Doña Mercedes also reported that when Pascual Pérez died, his son sold the masks and burned the *trajes*. Doña Mercedes and her husband Fermin Pérez Ramos bought the business around 1980. He carved the new masks. Fermin Pérez no longer works in the *morería*. Doña Mercedes has remarried and her husband has taken over some of the management tasks for the *morería*.

Doña Mercedes noted that she charges more for rental of the *trajes* of major characters because they become so destroyed through the period of dancing that she just saves the tassels and mirrors and has to burn the rest. She noted that she starts getting requests for the coming year's *traje* about the time of the second *octavo* when the Virgen del Tránsito has moved to her new *cofradía*. She begins the work in earnest in January and has the *trajes* finished by the end of July.

³ The author listed for this documentary, called Fiestas Maya-Quiché, is François Luis-Blanc. (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upzylycEh-g>). Also <http://inti.uniterre.com/>

Don Chico shared with me his record of the costs for traje rental in 2012. These costs in *quetzales* are listed below along with the *morería* record of the dancer who ordered each costume, of which there are generally two dancers who alternate:

Rey K'iche' - 700
Princes - 500
Malinches - 400
Tekum - 1350
Tzunun - 1200
Chávez - 700
Tepe - 700
Ixcot - 650
Saquimux - [650]
Ajitz grande - 1350
Ajitz Chiquito - 1000
Alvarado - 1100
Carrillo- 1000
Cardona - [1000]
Portocarrero - 1000
Calderón - 1000
Moreno - 1000
Quirijol - 1000

The Joyabaj *morería* style is distinguished by its rich and intense use of colour, not only for costumes and but also for masks. Intense fabric colours are offset by a liberal use of white material with embroidery that gives the feel of satin. For the light-skinned masks of the Rey K'iche', Princes, and *Caciques*, the skin tone is almost orange, and instead of a slight red blush on the cheeks, the skin is overpainted with solid red on the lips, cheeks, the centre of the forehead, and the lower chin. *Cacique* masks are painted a deep brown that, outside of direct sunlight, almost looks black. Joyabaj masks tend to be more carefully smoothed on the interior surface than those of



Tekum and Alvarado, showing mask styles. 2012.

other regions. However their sculptured surface is less naturalistic, with sharper lines and planar volumes.

In addition to the usual distinctions for masks of Tekum (two quetzals) and Tzunun (hummingbird and solar rays), the other four *Caciques* are also differentiated by the designs on their headbands in Joyabaj, though the identification with a particular *Cacique* varies. Designs include: 1) two confronting flowers in red and green (and sometimes yellow) that look like tulips but which *morena* Doña Mercedes identified as carnations; 2) a half moon, also red and green; 3) a vegetal design in green with yellow ovals; 4) a different vegetal or floral design in red and green. Such floral designs are common on the forehead of masks for other dancers as well, including Ajitz and Chiquito, but the latter lack the prominent sideburns. At Joyabaj, Ajitz may also feature quetzals on the forehead of his mask, perhaps due to his close relation with Tekum and personification of K'iche' people. However, Joyabaj masks for the *Torito* dance feature the same quetzal design. Wigs used for all characters are of braided yarn rather than curled maguey fibers.



Cacique costume

Concerning distinctions by group, K'iche' personages wear the short pants with the lower bordering band of white satin-like material decorated with fringe, trim and sequins. The front panel includes the typical arrangement of mirror, here on a satiny background, along with gold cord, tassels, and sequined cloth. The same pants are used in the Torito dance for *Vaqueros* (cowboys) and *Toritos*. The K'iche' *pechero* (shirt) features a broad, zigzag border in front with the usual fringe. In front also is the usual S-shaped chest panel but here joined with the neck panel to form a rectilinear top, decorated with beaded fringes, hanging tassels, and a mirror over the heart. Sleeves are of three colours, selecting from a palette of red, blue, purple or green and rarely yellow velvet. Cuffs feature a mirror and a panel of white satin-like material with the usual trim and sequin pattern, along with a tassel. The same shirt is used with different cape in the *Torito* dance. The K'iche' cape features the usual two part arrangement with decorated vertical bands that contrast with intervening plain velvet background. Borders are in contrasting colours. The lower decorated stripes feature the usual mirror arrangement with dangling gold braid. Rey K'iche's cape features an orange fringe, produced by stringing yellow beads on red thread. The colour orange is also closely associated with the Rey K'iche' at Momostenango.

K'iche' headdress panels feature the usual tin constructions: crowns for the court males, and double tiered crenelated forms for the Caciques, with lunar crescents on top for all but Tekum, who has the quetzal effigy. Lunar crescents derive from the representation of Moors in the *Moros y Cristianos* dances. Both types of K'iche' headdress include peaked stiffened forms on front and back, each formed of three colours of velvet and a central mirror, though only the mirror on the front panel has the usual winged backing. Each K'iche' personage wears four ostrich feathers, sewn onto the interior side of the velvet panels: two in front and two in back.



Court Group



Malinche cape

The Malinche traje is distinctive at Joyabaj. Since the Malinches represent Princesses at Q'umarcaaj, the settlement preceding Santa Cruz del Quiché, Malinches wear the women's traje characteristic of Santa Cruz del Quiché today, consisting of Salcajá style double *jaspé* (ikat) *corte* (skirt) elaborated with trim at the lower hem, and a *blusa* with elaborate fringe around the neck. Over the *blusa* Malinches wear an elaborate cape in an undulating triangular shape. Like the man's cape, it is made of two panels, the top one overlapping the bottom. Both parts of the Malinches' cape feature a wide undulating band with the typical Joyabaj design pattern on the satiny white material, above which is a panel of multiple colours of velvet. The velvet panel of the lower section is decorated with five evenly spaced mirrors, the three central ones of which have the winged backing assemblage. The velvet panel of the upper section is decorated with parallel lines of galloon trim. The Malinche crown is similar to that of *Caciques* but single crenelated tier, lacking both the upper tier and lunar crescent. Malinches' faces are hidden by a rectangular lace cloth that hangs from the headdress front.

For hand-held attributes, royal sceptres and the *Caciques' flecha* (bow-and-arrow combination) are painted in bright red, yellow and green rather than the monochrome silver as customary in other *morerías*. The plato is furnished with drilled ten *centavo* coins attached with strings. These strings frequently break, so the *autor* spends a good deal of time repairing them for the court and *Cacique* group dancers.

As elsewhere, Ajitz and Chiquito wear similar short pants to other K'iche' but with a red velvet ground and they wear a red jacket in military style with epaulettes. A wide ornamented satiny border with beaded fringe decorates the lower edge of the jacket on all sides. Above this are short ornamented bands to which are attached the string ties. The front of Ajitz's jacket is decorated with the usual fringed and tasseled S-shaped panel with a rectilinear top and a mirror over the heart. Cuffs have the usual mirror and decorated satin ornaments. The basic design on the back may be called a "diamond with legs" and is decorated in the standard Joyabaj format. In contrast with the K'iche' shirt or cape, the area of velvet around this design is also decorated. The red shako hat features a mirror with trim and sequin designs, a beaded fringe that hangs from the upper edge, tassels, and a red-dyed ostrich feather sewn to the front peak. Wigs are of golden rather than red hair, a colour shared with members of the



Ajitz Costume

court and the Spaniards. As Ajitz and Chiquito carry whips rather than chains at Joyabaj, they use ropes to bind the Ambassadors. In Joyabaj, the priest-diviner's axes have very tiny blades and they do not brandish these while dancing but instead let them hang from their wrists like the whip while they dance with hands on their hips. Ajitz's doll-like idol is softer and as usual has articulated legs so that it can sit on the table for divination. I was told that this idol is the guide of Ajitz and tells him about the Spanish coming, so that Ajitz can then tell Tekum.

Spaniards wear white pants, which they supply themselves, to which long ornamented velvet strips were once attached at the side with safety pins. These strips were not used in 2012, since dancers complained that the pins sometimes open up and prick the dancer during active battle scenes. Leather cuffs protect their legs from whipping by Ajitz and Chiquito. Spaniards wear the military jacket with epaulettes with the same sleeves as K'iche' shirts. Although in different colours, decorations in satiny material with trim, sequins and mirrors are similar to Ajitz's coat, with the exception that they lack a lower border but feature a narrow belt with ornamented satiny material. Spaniards wear the usual admiralty cap with a mirror on either side, a beaded fringe, and tassels at each end. Only two ostrich feathers are used, both sewn to the front of the cap and overlapping, with a different colour combination for each character.



Spaniards Costume.

13.3.2. Text

Two nearly identical texts are used in Joyabaj. One, used for several years by *autor* Domingo Castro, is hand-written. The other, owned by *maestro* Benito Ajanel, is typed but bound in a notebook. Don Chico believes that Don Benito obtained this text from San Andrés Sajcabajá, a *municipio* to the north of Joyabaj. Don Benito was hired as *maestro* both by Domingo Gutiérrez in 2009 and Francisco Ordoñez in 2012, the two years in which I was most closely involved with Joyabaj's *Conquista*. Don Benito noted that he also owns the books, and serves as *maestro*, for the *Torito* and *Venado* teams, and in 2012 he assisted the *Venado* team throughout the *feria*.

The text used in Joyabaj is a modification of a Cantel text, but of a different lineage than that in use at San Cristóbal. Thus it lacks the prologue with Ajitz and Tekum and the short sequence with the Azteca or Lacandón. However it does include Tekum's interruption of the first court scene to announce that he will sleep. The text at Joyabaj was likely modified and amplified several times, so that much of it has been reworded though retaining the same content. The resulting Joyabaj text now represents the longest one I have seen, at over 13,000 words, more than twice the length of the oldest known texts for the Conquest Dance. This exceptional length is derived not only from the Cantel-style expansions of the individual addresses by Spaniards and *Caciques* to their leader, and not only from expansion of speeches by main characters, but also by large sections of added dialogue between Tekum and Alvarado at the Spanish *entrada*. These *entrada* dialogues are adapted from the Cantel-originated dialogues between the same personages that intervene between each of the skirmishes in the later battle. Another Joyabaj addition is that each of Ajitz Grande's speeches is repeated identically by Ajitz Chiquito. And finally, Carrillo is given a greater role in the Joyabaj text as second-in-command to Alvarado, who relies on him for strategic information and for carrying out orders related to others in his command.

As the Cantel text was being modified through the early and middle 20th century, it contains several historical references that are not found in older texts. These include many detailed and sometimes contradictory references to K'iche' settlements. Thus the capital Uatlán (Q'umarcaaj) is mentioned and Totonicapán is mentioned under its modern Nahuatl name as well as the older K'iche' name of Chuimequená (Chwi Mek'ena). Locations of the sequence of battles by which the Spanish invaders defeated the K'iche' army are also detailed. Shared with the San Cristóbal text is a mention of the planned monument to Tekum on Cerro Baúl, the hill where many believe Tekum was buried. This reference can be dated specifically to 1933–34.

Also typical of Cantel-derived texts are added or modified speeches that emphasize Tekum's heroism, in his decision to fight although he has seen his own death, while downplaying his moment of indecision. Tekum's modified texts are replete with references to defending the fatherland, a common conceit after 1870 that came to be specifically associated with the legend of Tekum when the liberal revolution transformed Los Altos ideology into national policy. The Joyabaj text concludes with paired speeches by the *gracejos*, Ajitz and Quirijol, as derived from the Cantel texts but also found in others

as at Cunén. But many of the expansions and modifications do not change the content: they seem designed simply to offer more text, resulting in a dramatic contrast with the spare and pointed poetry of the early style versions.

In Joyabaj, those performers who memorize the text declaim it in a standard cadence. For each line, words are pronounced at a fairly slow pace with a special emphasis on the last accented syllable of a line of poetry, after which the voice falls in pitch if there is an unaccented ultimate syllable. The last line of a speech is delivered differently: it is usually spoken rapidly and without emphasis. The general deliberate nature of declamation allows the best actors to draw out and even pantomime the meaning of one or more key words in each phrase.

13.3.3. Staging

As most of the dancing is performed at *cofradías*, whether in the patio or in the street out front, Joyabaj shares with Cunén the lack of a platform for Rey K'iche's palace. The dance ground is thus organized at Joyabaj similar to Cunén's. When the group arrives at the dance venue, the place of the musicians is decided first, then the four groups of dancers are arranged in relation to them. The court group will be on the end opposite the musicians, the *Cacique* group will be on the musicians' right, and the Spaniards will be on the musicians' left. Spaniards are present from the beginning of the performance, unlike San Cristóbal and Momostenango, so most remain standing or seated on their side for the two hours required to perform the opening dance and Part I. As elsewhere, battle skirmishes require constant reversals of position. I was told that a coffin for Tekum had been formerly used at Joyabaj but was difficult to carry from *cofradía* to *cofradía*.

When it is necessary to participate in a religious procession or the school desfile, the *Conquista* performance is likely to be shortened. The most drastic cut I have seen went directly from the Spaniards' *entrada* at the beginning of part II to the battle scene of part IV.

13.3.4. Gestures and Pantomime

Dancers at Joyabaj are fond of using a large range of hand gestures to amplify meaning, as will be partially detailed in the description of the dance sequence. In addition to the standard hand gestures used especially in pantomime, the best dancers use a wide repertoire of body movements to enhance the dramatic impact of their speeches.

As typical in all cases, interaction of Ajitz with the Ambassadors involves an extended pantomime, but in Joyabaj, Ajitz Chiquito has a more important role in this scene, himself stealing Cardona's sword and

binding both Ambassadors' legs. However in Joyabaj the most detailed pantomimes appear in the battle, in sections where first Alvarado and then Tekum are wounded. Two scenes of waking Tekum from sleep also involve a set series of pantomimed actions.

Most distinctive of Joyabaj pantomime is the interaction between the *gracejos* or clowns. In Joyabaj, because Ajitz Chiquito is danced by an older child and has a large role in the pantomimes, he too must be paired with a Spaniard, specifically Moreno. The four clowns, Ajitz Grande and Chiquito on the *Cacique* side and Quirijol and Moreno on the Spanish side, move freely and incessantly throughout the dance ground. They are literally clowns at Joyabaj, engaging in continuous slapstick assaults on each other played primarily for humour. Contrast of their slapstick behavior and youthful exuberance with the grave and venerable bearded faces adds to the comedy. Ajitz and Chiquito also use their whips to control the Spanish clowns, aiming at the leather cuffs that protect their shins. These four begin 'cutting up' from the end of the opening dance, often making their best effort to completely interrupt the serious and tragic encounters and thus focusing the attention of the audience. Even when Ajitz and Chiquito are wailing in mourning in one of Tekum's funeral marches, the Spanish clowns are likely to completely disrupt their actions with these humorous assaults. Their humour extends to the battle scene though not as slapstick, and at certain points they will break from humour to fight heroically.

This clowning behavior at Joyabaj has no narrative arc to it. It never develops or changes, but continues the same way throughout the performance, with the sole exception of the wounding rounds in the long battle sequence, thereby providing an ongoing parody of military conflict. My initial reaction to this behavior was frustration because the clowns always seemed to get in the way when I was trying to take a photo of a significant action in the drama, a preference for narrative I have tried to unlearn. Ultimately I came to greatly appreciate the spontaneity and creativity of these clowns' improvisations.

13.3.5. Music

I have seen two *Conquista* teams perform simultaneously in Joyabaj, but found that neither *chirimiista* played more than a few *sones* which thus are repeated over and over. This was especially disappointing considering that only in Joyabaj could I witness the individual dances that introduce each of the *Caciques* and Spaniards (except for Tekum and Alvarado), each of which should involve a different *son* identified only with that character.

13.3.6. Dance Steps and Choreography

Like most *Conquista* groups studied, the Joyabaj dancers use a limited number of steps, designed largely to differentiate K'iche', Spaniard, and Priest-Diviners. As usual Spaniards use both a march and a dance step. And as usual, Spaniards and Priest-diviners tend to dance facing forwards while K'iche'

tend to alternate sides. When there are two K'iche' dancing (Tekum and Rey K'iche' or the two Princes), they will alternate back-to-back and front-to front. Where the different steps come together more is in the choreographed battle skirmishes. Also, when the Rey K'iche' dances a *vuelta* with Tekum or Alvarado, it is normally accomplished by slow rotation as a unit rather than each revolving around the other. *Vueltas* in general are more common at Joyabaj than elsewhere, since they are required whenever anyone leaves or enters the line or changes position within the line. These *vueltas* are especially notable in the battle sequence since for each skirmish one group or the other must change direction, requiring group *vueltas* both before and after the shift.

The most distinctive aspect of the Joyabaj *Conquista* is the choreography of line dances of the Spaniards or *Caciques* (and once the Priest-Diviners). After the normal first round, the second round differs, with the line coming up or near the central axis before continuing on to the appropriate side (Spaniard or K'iche'). Once most of the line members are deposited in their position, the leader will continue dancing solo. He will dance down the central axis from the music to the court side, then back up the centre again. On reaching the center of the music side he dances in a slow 360° rotation *vuelta*. This rotation ends with the leader facing the musicians, at which point he uses his *plato*, sword, or flag to signal the musicians to stop playing. The leader is then in position to deliver a monologue to his troops.

13.4. Dance Performance Sequence

13.4.1. Opening Dance

As elsewhere (excepting San Cristóbal), the opening dance may take up to an hour and as usual it involves complex choreography organized into a largely symmetrical sequence. At Joyabaj, although they have no part in the drama for a considerable time, the Spaniards are present on their side from the beginning. Thus although they usually wait till the end of the opening, the two Spaniard clowns, Moreno and Quirijol, may disrupt this thoroughly ordered choreography as well, requiring Ajitz Grande and Chiquito to break from their part in the dance and respond.

The opening dance begins when Rey K'iche' emerges from the court side to begin a counter-clockwise circuit, dancing a step that will also be followed by the *Caciques*.⁴ While Rey K'iche' is making his slow



Tekum joins Rey K'iche' in the opening dance. 2012.

progress around the dance ground, the other K'iche' characters, the *Caciques* and the youths of the court, perform the same side to side motion while dancing in place. As elsewhere, when any character is moving within the dance ground, all other K'iche' characters invariably dance in place.

After 2 ½ rounds, Rey K'iche' arrives at Tekum's position, and Tekum emerges from the line to join him. Rather than dancing single file, only Rey K'iche' and

Tekum dance as a pair, alternately face-to-face and back-to-back. In this duet, Rey K'iche' remains toward the outside of the dance ground and Tekum toward the inside. Dancing as a pair, their corner *vueltas* are distinctive. Instead of circling quickly around each other, Rey K'iche' and Tekum face each other and, as they oscillate side to side, they also gradually rotate 90 degrees as a unit, thus turning the corner. Once the rotation is finished, one of the two will signal the time to resume the arrangement of facing towards alternating directions by raising his arms and shaking his *plato*, after which both turn around so they are again back-to-back.

⁴ The standard K'iche' step begins with a side-to-side motion, usually three steps to one side then three steps to the other, shaking the *plato* when the leading foot steps in the direction of progress. As the leading foot advances, the arm on the same side is thrust upward, while the legs are flexed, lowering the body. As the non-leading foot catches up, the knees are straightened and the torso rises. This alternation gives a jazzy "swing" to the K'iche' step. When the dancer is about to perform the turn to the alternate direction, he lifts both arms up high and gives a decisive shake with the *plato*, followed by a pause. Then the non-leading foot crosses in front to turn the body forward, and the leading foot steps in front of it. The non-leading foot now becomes the leading foot. It is now raised high and as the body turns the rest of the way, this new leading foot is tapped against the ground next to the non-leading foot, and then moved out to the side in the direction of progress. Three steps are taken with each foot then again followed by the shake and pause followed by the turn and exchange of leading foot.

Continuing their counter-clockwise circuit, as Rey K'iche' and Tekum pass the court the first Prince joins them. Then as they reach the opposite or music side, Tzunun crosses from the *Cacique* position and joins the end of the line. Passing the court again, the first Malinche joins the line. And when passing the *Cacique* line after this, the next *Cacique* (Chávez) joins. Continuing on all the rest of the



Opening dance, full line. 2012

Caciques join, then the Second Prince and Second Malinche. Note that all following Rey K'iche' and Tekum dance in single file rather than pairs, and they all maintain the direction that Tekum faces as he alternates. These others also perform the standard *vuelta* when the leaders reach the corners, circling round each other. Last to join the line, as elsewhere, are the non-noble priest-diviners, Ajitz and Chiquito, who join as a pair. As elsewhere, Ajitz and Chiquito dance a different step than the *Caciques* and members of the court. They dance facing forward and holding their hands on their hips, with their axes and whips dangling from their wrists.⁵ While this represents the fullest version of what I have called the waxing phase of the opening dance, it may also be shortened by having all the *Caciques* at once cross over to the music side and join the line at the same time, rather than singly and on distinct circuits.

When Ajitz and Chiquito have joined, and thus all non-Spanish participants are gathered into a line following the ruler and his heir, the waxing phase concludes with two further counter-clockwise

⁵ In the step used by Ajitz and Chiquito, the leading foot skims the ground, extends forward, then arcs to the side and slightly back before being put down. The alternate foot moves to join it. Then as the knees flex the leading foot takes a step forward. The alternate foot then takes the lead, extending, arcing to the side and back.

circuits. This begins the central or turning–point of the opening dance. At the centre of the music side, Tekum and Rey K'iche' perform a 180° rotation so that Tekum is now on the outside and Rey K'iche' on the inside. Tekum then shakes hands with Rey K'iche' while saying “Adios, Rey K'iche'.” At this point, Rey K'iche' backs towards the centre of the dance ground. While Tekum continues to lead the rest of the dancers in a counter–clockwise circuit around him, Rey K'iche' dances backwards and forwards along the central axis.

On the second circuit around Rey K'iche', the waning phase of the opening dance begins, as each dancer will be redeposited in—or perhaps appointed to—their appropriate place. As elsewhere, dancers leave in the reverse order that they entered, beginning with Ajitz and Chiquito as a pair and ending with Tekum. And as elsewhere, each dancer before leaving leads the line to their position, and with each leaving the line reverses direction twice. That is: the line will reverse from counter–clockwise to clockwise at the Alvarado corner, then reverse clockwise to counter–clockwise at the Tekum corner. For the waning phase then, the line thus moves along three sides between Alvarado and Tekum corners, avoiding the music side.

This waning or leaving procedure requires more explanation. As Ajitz Grande and Chiquito will be the first to leave the line, when they reach the Alvarado corner during the second circuit around Rey K'iche', they dance diagonally into the centre to join Rey K'iche'. Tekum, leading the rest of the dancers, has reached the diagonally opposite Ajitz corner by this time, and from that position leads the other dancers up behind Rey K'iche' and the priest–diviners to reform a single line. The full line then moves directly to the Alvarado corner and reverses direction to clockwise, moving down the Spanish line, across the court line, and up the *Cacique* line. Upon reaching the Tekum corner, three movements take place in quick succession: 1) Ajitz and Chiquito shake hands with Rey K'iche' and enter the *Cacique* line at the Tekum corner; 2) the next to leave (second Malinche) crosses from the end of the line to take the lead; and 3) the line reverses direction to counter–clockwise.

Second Malinche then leads the line to the Alvarado corner, where the line reverses to clockwise. As the line passes the court, Second Malinche remains there. Between the court line and Tekum corner on this round, there is not yet a dancer who will be next to leave Rey K'iche', so for this gap Tekum renews his back–to–back and front–to–front duet with Rey K'iche'.

When the line reaches the Tekum corner, the next to leave (second Prince) steps forward from the back of the line to the front in order to take the lead and the line reverses to counter–clockwise. Again the line reverses to clockwise at the Alvarado corner, Second Prince leaves at the court, and Tekum resumes his duet with Rey K'iche'. Again upon reaching the Tekum corner the line reverses to counter–clockwise while the last *Cacique* (Saquimux) steps forward to take the lead. At the Alvarado corner the line again reverses to clockwise and when reaching the Tekum corner it will be time for Saquimux to leave the line. After he shakes hands with Rey K'iche', he enters the line at the Tekum corner, causing

Ajitz and Chiquito to move down one position on the line. Saquimux also does a *vuelta* with Ajitz and Chiquito because he is entering a line. Ixcot then crosses to the front and leads the line counter-clockwise to the Alvarado corner, and so on until all *Caciques* and first Prince have reached their positions.

After depositing First Prince at the court in a clockwise direction, Rey K'iche' and Tekum are once again a lone pair of dancers, so they resume their front-to-front and back-to-back duet. They continue to the Tekum corner and for the last time reverse there to a counter-clockwise direction. The pair dances two more counter-clockwise rounds to reach the Tekum corner the final time. Again they do the slow side-to-side rotation 180° degrees to put Tekum on the outside. As they shake hands or touch their *platos* together, Tekum again says “*Adios, Rey K'iche'!*” Then Tekum enters his line and does a *vuelta* with Tzunun.

The final section of the opening dance begins as Rey K'iche' continues alone in the counter-clockwise direction. On his second round, as he reaches the centre of the music side, he begins dancing backwards towards the court side, while the Princes and Malinches of the court dance forward to meet him, thus beginning a version of what for Cunén I have called the “honouring sequence”, likely designed to dedicate the drama that will follow to the patron saint. I have seen many different variations on this honouring sequence. One of the most complete I recorded proceeded as follows:

- As Rey K'iche' danced backwards from the music side along the central axis, the youths of the court danced forwards to meet him.
- As they met, Rey K'iche' danced *vuelatas* with the youths, first with those on his right and then those on his left.
- At the conclusion of the *vuelatas*, all court members turned to face the court side.
- Rey K'iche' led the court members in dancing forwards to the court side.
- All then danced backwards to the music side.
- All danced forwards again to the court side.
- All danced backwards again to the music side.
- At the music side they performed *vuelatas* and turned towards the music side.
- All then danced backwards to the court side.
- All danced forwards to the music side.
- Rey K'iche' again danced separate *vuelatas* with those on his left and those on his right.
- All danced backwards to the court side.
- Rey K'iche' danced *vuelatas* with the youths, first with those on his right and then those on his left.

After Rey K'iche' dances *vuelatas* with the youths on each side, the four youths remain in the court line. With the honouring sequence concluded, Rey K'iche' leaves the court line and dances forwards for a solo along the central axis, ending by using his flag to signal the musicians to stop playing.

13.4.2. Part I

13.4.2.1. Scene 1: Q'umarcaaj

When the music stops, Rey K'iche' retreats toward the court side and delivers what he remembers of the opening monologue, '*Valerme, Dios, Valerme*' (Help me, God, help me). During this speech, the four clowns become more active in harassing each other with slapstick pantomime suggesting severe blows. Ajitz and Chiquito will also use their whips against the Spanish clowns' leather cuffs to control their behavior, to which the Spanish Clowns reply with the pantomime of *desafío* (challenge), drawing a line or arc on the ground with the tip of their sword. In another form of challenge, both groups are likely to clap their hands at each other.

As in many locations, Rey K'iche' has not learned the second monologue ("*Hijas mías levantad*" [Rise up my daughters]) given in response to the Princes' and Malinches' demand to know the cause of his despair, and the youths likewise know little or none of their part in this scene. So as soon as Rey K'iche' has delivered the few lines he remembers of the *Valerme* monologue, the focus shifts immediately to an interruption into the Q'umarcaaj scene of a speech by Tekum, a 20th century invention by Cantel *autores* that was also adopted at San Cristóbal and Momostenango. Beginning with the phrase "*O vasallos míos*" (Oh my vassals), Tekum paces in front of the *Caciques* as he recites this text. Tekum articulates a presentiment, foreboding thoughts and a sense of exhaustion. At the end of this monologue, Tekum announces that he must sleep. He returns to his line and sits or squats to represent his sleep.

Action now returns to the court with the Princes' suggestion that they summon Tekum, after which the Princes set out on their dance to Quetzaltenango. This dialogue is also rarely remembered, so it usually happens that as soon as Tekum goes to sleep, the musicians begin the dance for the Princes. These youths dance counter-clockwise and as a pair, alternating front-to-front with back-to-back.

13.4.2.2. Scene 2: Quetzaltenango

When they arrive at Tekum's position after 1 ½ rounds, the Princes find Tekum still asleep, leading to a fairly set pantomime. When they awaken him after considerable effort, Tekum's response is dramatic. Tekum starts from his dream, runs wildly down the



The Princes dance to Quetzaltenango. 2009.

line of *Caciques*, kneels, wipes his eyes, and looks around to see what has startled him. Ajitz runs to him, helps him wipe his face and eyes and points out the Princes. Tekum kneels and shades his eyes to have a good look. Tekum moves closer, kneeling again and staring, then carefully touching one of the Princes to test whether he is awake or still dreaming. Finally, Tekum responds to the Princes, grabbing and shaking the first Prince's shoulders as he addresses him with the question "*¿Qué dices, Principe amado?*" (What are you saying, beloved Prince?).

After the Princes reprimand Tekum for being unaware of the approaching danger, Tekum delivers a long speech—a Cantel addition—that begins "*Mil perdones, vasallos*" (A thousand pardons, vassals). Tekum tells of the dream from which he was awakened. In the dream an aged and venerable man told him of Alvarado's invasion and predicted that in the coming battle, Tzunun, his trusted second-in-command, would be the first to betray him by stealing his crown. As he says this, Tekum puts his hand on Tzunun's shoulder in a friendly way, suggesting both the irony of being betrayed, Caesar-like, by his best friend, as well as forgiveness for the betrayal. Tekum then relates that in his dream he found himself in his palace gathering his troops and heading for the battlefield where he then found himself in combat with Alvarado. After his death at Alvarado's hands he saw himself buried on Cerro El Baúl. The Princes advise Tekum that the dream spoke truly and the danger is real.

Tekum agrees with the Princes that he must go to Q'umarcaaj to receive the authority of command from the Rey K'iche'. His loyal vassals, the *Caciques*, each in turn offer their support. Each in order steps out in front of Tekum, speaks words of support, and as he follows the *Cacique* back to his place in line, Tekum responds to each. Ajitz Grande and Chiquito dialogue more dramatically with Tekum. Ajitz Grande hops three times, then delivers his lines with dramatic side-to-side pivoting rotations that both demonstrates his ceaseless activity and allows him to watch for assaults from the Spanish clowns. Ajitz encourages Tekum to come with him to the mountain to see what the gods will say, then on finishing he hops again. Ajitz Chiquito then repeats these movements and exactly the same words and in the same manner. Tekum also follows Ajitz Grande and Chiquito back to their place as he begins a short speech "*Ajitz, Amigos de los encantos*" (Ajitz, friends of the spirits), in which he counters Ajitz's fears with his own courage. He continues his speech pacing in front of the *Cacique* line as he plans the journey. The *Caciques* affirm the journey in unison, though in performance Tzunun usually responds for the *Caciques* as a whole.

13.4.2.3. Scene 3: Q'umarcaaj

Organizing the *Caciques* for the journey to Q'umarcaaj, Tekum forms them in a line behind him and the Princes along the music side, so that they can dance counter-clockwise to the court. This is because in Joyabaj as in some other localities, it appears to be inappropriate to approach the Rey K'iche' from a clockwise circuit. After one round, returning to the music side, the line of Princes and *Caciques* can move down the dance field along the central axis, the proper approach to the court and



Caciques kneel to greet Rey K'iche'. 2011.

king. When they arrive, the *Caciques* kneel in a line facing Rey K'iche'. However Ajitz and Chiquito stand with their backs against this line, as lookouts, both in a general sense of looking out for approaching Spanish danger and specifically to defend against the inevitable attempted disruption by the two Spanish clowns. After Tekum delivers his greeting, Rey K'iche' asks the *Caciques* to rise, himself holding Tekum's hands and raising him up. Tekum addresses Rey K'iche' again

and moves to his right, while the other *Caciques* each in turn makes his formal address to the sovereign and moves to his left. Ajitz Grande and Chiquito as usual hop before and after their address and pivot side to side as they deliver their lines. They argue that with Lucifer's help, their axes will devastate the Spaniards. Then the Malinches should deliver their song to the volcanoes that they should erupt and destroy the invaders. However in Joyabaj, if they know the lines, they speak rather than sing this passage.

Tekum and Rey K'iche' now sit or squat for a private discussion in very low voice. In this discussion, Rey K'iche' explains his despair and horror concerning the coming Spanish invasion. In a very long but private speech that begins "*Quiché, deja ese inutil llanto,*" (K'iche', cease these useless tears) Tekum insists that it is a time for courage, not despair. Death and destruction of the kingdom may be certain, but it is better to die with honour in defense of the nation rather than quake in fear. Throughout this conversation, the Spanish clowns will attempt to disrupt it, or at the very least they will mime eavesdropping on the chat, to be chased away by Ajitz and Chiquito. At the end of this conversation, both Tekum and Rey K'iche' rise and Rey K'iche' gives Tekum the flag as a sign that Tekum now has complete military command to defend the kingdom against the invaders. Tekum takes the flag, and as he vows that he will tinge the Samalá river with Spanish blood, he darts into the centre of the dance ground, jumps and twirls in mid-air brandishing the flag in a bold challenge.



Tekum and Rey K'iche' in private conversation. 2012.

Tekum and his followers must now return to Quetzaltenango to begin fortifying the borders. As Tekum takes leave of Rey K'iche', the two perform the paired *vuelta* in which they slowly rotate 360 degrees, then say *Adios* and shake hands as Tekum leads off the *Caciques*.

13.4.2.4. Scene 4: Quetzaltenango

Tekum leads the *Caciques* in a clockwise circuit dance back to Quetzaltenango. This is the first clear example of the type of dance involving a major character, which ends in a specific pattern. The first element of this standard pattern is that the second round is diminished, as Tekum leads the *Cacique* line down the central axis from the music to the court side, rather than down the Spanish side. Then as the line turns and proceeds up the *Cacique* side, the *Caciques* stay in their place, while Tekum continues dancing solo. Tekum again dances down the central axis from the music to the court sides, then dances up the centre again, facing the music side. Upon reaching the centre of the music side, he dances side to side while slowly rotating 360°, after which he signals the musicians to stop. The pattern, to be repeated with Alvarado as well as Ajitz and Chiquito in later dances, thus involves the diminished second round, solo dance along the central axis, slow rotation at the centre of the music side, and signal to the musicians. The pattern was earlier anticipated, in partial form, by the Rey K'iche's solo at the end of the opening dance and its concluding honouring sequence.

After his signal to the musicians, Tekum walks to the *Cacique* line and paces along it as he delivers the speech designating his plan of defense: “*Ya mis caciques aliados*” (Now my allied *Caciques*). In this speech Tekum orders the conch to be sounded (‘*Que suene el caracol*’) and points to the drummer. As the *tamborista* responds by playing a steady beat on the drum, Tekum performs a military march up the length of the *Cacique* line to the music side, clicks his heels and salutes. As usual for this kind of response from the *tamborista*, as at Cunén, the Spanish clowns try to dampen the drum by holding their hand against the bottom drumhead, while their adversaries, Ajitz Grande and Chiquito, defend the drum from their interference.

After Tekum’s speech, the *Caciques* again individually offer their words of allegiance, but this time each does so after a dance. Tzunun, the highest ranked *Cacique* under Tekum, begins the sequence by doing a *vuelta* with the next *Cacique*, Chávez, then stepping in front of Tekum and taking the flag. Tzunun then dances counter-clockwise a full circuit back to Tekum to deliver his text and have Tekum respond. The next is Chávez, who performs a *vuelta* with Tepe and then steps out of line and does another *vuelta* with Tzunun. While Tzunun dances a return circuit clockwise in order to return to his place in line, Chávez does his initial circuit counter-clockwise in order to confront Tekum directly. When the two dancers pass half way around, they perform a *vuelta*, and Chávez takes the flag from Tzunun. Then after completing the circuit, Tzunun can return to his place in line, performing a *vuelta* with Tekum, while Chávez comes to report to Tekum with the flag. This process continues with each of

the *Caciques* until it is the turn of Ajitz Grande and Chiquito. They dance together, and they do not take the flag when they pass the final *Cacique* half way around. Instead, the final *Cacique*, who may be Saquimux or Ixcot, depending on how many dancers are available, will take the flag all the way back to Tekum, hand it to him, and then after doing a *vuelta* with the preceding *Cacique* he will enter the line at his position. Meanwhile Ajitz and Chiquito dance to Tekum and each delivers their lines with the usual pivoting motion preceded and followed by a hop. Ajitz Grande and Chiquito must then dance back alone, ending their solo with the pattern of diminished circuit, central axis solo, slow rotation at the centre of the music side, and signal to the musicians to stop. However, on at least one occasion the pair enter the central axis by dancing diagonally from the Ajitz corner to the centre of the dance ground, rather than coming to the centre from the music side.

13.4.3. Part 2

13.4.3.1. Scene 1: The Spanish Entrada



Entrada march. 2009.

The scene of the Spanish *entrada* is considerably amplified at Joyabaj. First, because of the Cantel-derived text, Alvarado delivers four speeches, one on each side of the plaza, rather than a single speech. Some of the longer passages in these speeches were cribbed from the Mexican National Anthem and appear in the Cantel booklet published in 1934. Second, in a Joyabaj addition, Tekum is present at the *entrada* and responds to each of Alvarado's speeches, using phrases that the Joyabaj author compiled largely from the battle interludes of the Cantel text.

The gist of Alvarado's four speeches is that he assures his captains of success in the coming campaign, waged in the name of the church, the Spanish crown, and Hernán Cortés. The gist of Tekum's response is defiance, assuring the *Caciques* of their victory over the Spanish invaders. Thus although in the text, each of the speeches by Alvarado and Tekum is directed toward their own followers, in performance they direct these speeches largely to each other. As a consequence, Alvarado's speeches and Tekum's responses can be dramatically enhanced with gestures of *desafío*



Tekum and Alvarado exchange challenges. 2011.

(challenge), in which Alvarado uses his sword to draw a line back and quickly forth on the ground, and Tekum does the same with the tip of his flag staff. Furthermore, at specific words or phrases in these interchanges, the speaker signals the other leader that they will perform a *cruzada*. The two leaders take positions at opposite ends of a diagonal, run at each other, jump, turning in the air and clashing weapons before they land, then continuing on to the opposite corner.

To begin this *entrada* scene, the Spaniards who have been standing in a line on their side of the dance ground through the preceding parts of their performance, now march in a line one-quarter round counter-clockwise, stopping as they are lined up along the music side. The *Caciques*, led by Tekum, reverse their order (each pair doing a *vuelta* in their new positions), so that Tekum can at the same time lead the *Caciques* counter-clockwise to line up on the court side. Tekum then steps out in front of the other *Caciques* and paces back and forth as the Spaniards march forward in a line towards the *Caciques*, then turn, march back to the music side, turn again and stand at attention.

Alvarado salutes with his sword to stop the music, then comes forward from his ranks and paces before his troops to deliver his first speech, to which Tekum responds. There are no *cruzadas* in this first dialogue. Then musicians play the march again and both Spaniards and *Caciques* move to the next side of the dance ground, with Spaniards arriving at the *Cacique* side and *Caciques* arriving at the Spanish side, both Spaniards and *Caciques* performing *vuelatas* in pairs both before and after they march. Again the Spaniards march toward the K'iche', turn and march back, then signal the music to stop. Again Alvarado and Tekum pace in front of their troops, deliver their texts and perform their challenges. However, there is more action to the dialogue of this second part of the *entrada*. First, Alvarado calls for the bugle and drum to sound, which leads Ajitz and Chiquito to try to dampen the drum while Quirijol and Moreno try to shield it from them. Second, at the words "*Salid furias infernales*" (Arise Furies of Hell) and at the words "*Acercate pués Alvarado atrevido*" (Come closer then bold Alvarado), Tekum signals Alvarado for performance of a *cruzada*.

Both sides now march again for the third part of the *entrada*, with the Spaniards arriving at the court side and the *Caciques* at the music side. After the usual Spanish advance and retreat toward the *Caciques*, the music stops and Alvarado asks Carrillo for the loan of his spyglass. Carrillo positions himself in front of Alvarado to respond, an action that Tekum or the Ajitz pair will try to disrupt, after which Tekum taunts Alvarado saying that he doesn't need anyone to loan him courage.

Both sides march for the fourth time, with the Spaniards ending on the Spanish side and the *Caciques* on the *Cacique* side. After the usual advance and retreat, Alvarado begins his speech with a *crusada*, as does Tekum, the latter on the repeated line “*Acércate pues Alvarado atrevido.*” At the end of Tekum's speech, the *Caciques* change their order again, so that Tekum, like Alvarado, is at the end of his line towards the music side. As usual, this change in position requires each *Cacique* to perform a *vuelta* with his neighbour at the new position.

13.4.3.2. Scene 2: Spanish Camp

Led by Alvarado, the Spanish now dance rather than march. The Spaniards dance facing forward rather than alternating directions. With the left hand on the hip and the right hand holding the sword horizontally in front, the right wrist alternately raises and lowers the sword with each step, still keeping it



Spaniards dance. 2009.

horizontal.⁶ The Spaniards dance two counter-clockwise circuits, complete with corner *vuelatas*, finishing with the standard diminished second round, solo dance by Alvarado along the central axis, slow revolving *vuelta* at the centre of the music side, and signal for the musicians to stop.

⁶ As with the K'iche' step, the Spanish dance step involves three steps in one direction, then three steps in the other direction. However, the Spaniards do not face alternately inwards and outwards as do the K'iche'. Rather they face diagonally forward, alternately leftward and rightward. When the right foot takes over as the lead, the right knee is strongly flexed, raising the foot high next to the other leg. The right foot is then extended in front, tapped against the ground, and turned inward before it is put down, pivoting the dancer to a leftward diagonal. The left foot then moves to directly behind the right foot. The leading right foot now takes a big step to the right side, and the left foot and moves behind it. As the dancer is facing on a diagonal, this sideways step moves the dancer diagonally forward. A second and a third pair of steps are taken in this manner. Then the left foot will take over as the leading foot. In this case, when the right foot takes the third big step, rather than crossing behind the left foot is instead raised high at the side, extended to the front, and pivoted inward (rightward) before it is put down, with the right foot crossing behind. Now the dancer is turned to a rightwards diagonal and the three big steps to the left side with the left foot move him forward on a leftwards diagonal. Progress is thus in the form of a zigzag. Also, with each step the knees are flexed and straightened so

Carrillo then stands in front of Alvarado and speaks about assigning a sentry. Carrillo then walks down the line of Spaniards and speaks to Quirijol, assigning him to that post. Carrillo and Quirijol salute each other with their swords then, while still raised high, cross their swords. Carrillo then returns to a position in front of Alvarado and reports that the sentry has been posted, repeating the salute and crossed swords with Alvarado. Carrillo then enters the line performing *vuelta* with Cardona. This sequence for setting the sentry is sometimes skipped. The dancers may make up for the lapse, or even repeat the sequence, just before Quirijol's sentry duty becomes significant in Part IV.

Alvarado next speaks to the Spaniards, beginning "*Caballeros de mi guardia*" (Knights of my guard). He begins at the far end with Quirijol, then paces up and down along the side, encouraging his troops by assuring they will be victorious and the K'iche' will be baptized. This is actually the speech that appears in older versions of the text, displaced by the four new speeches for the entrada in the Cantel/Joyabaj version. In this speech the *tamborista* responds to the words "*Mandando a tocar los tambores*" (having

the drums sound) whereupon the clowns engage in the usual attempts to dampen or defend the drum.



Ajitz dampens drum. 2012.

Each of the Spaniards may now individually demonstrate their compliance with the campaign, in a form analogous to the conversations of the *Caciques* that ended the previous part. The sequence of individual dances and reports begins with Carrillo performing a *vuelta* with Cardona then stepping out in front of Alvarado and saluting. Carrillo then dances clockwise around the circuit to directly confront and speak his text to Alvarado. When finished, the next in line, Cardona, performs a *vuelta* with Portocarrero and steps out, then does

a *vuelta* with Carrillo. The two now set off in opposite directions, with Cardona coming towards Alvarado clockwise and Carrillo returning to his position in line counter-clockwise. When they pass half way around they do a *vuelta* but do not exchange anything. Each also does a *vuelta* when returning into the line. The last of these Spaniards to report is Quirijol, who recites his comic speech asserting his gluttony. Naturally, while Quirijol and his predecessor Moreno are dancing and reporting to Alvarado, their counterpart clowns Ajitz and Chiquito are doing their best to disrupt the proceedings. So when they report to Alvarado, they pivot on diagonals, as Ajitz and Chiquito do, to keep a lookout.

that the torso lowers and rises, and this motion is accentuated by the up-and-down motion of the sword held horizontally in front.

Generally Quirijol does not dance back to his place in line, as the other Spaniards have done, but instead immediately resumes clowning with Ajitz and Chiquito.⁷

13.4.3.3. Scene 3: Spanish camp to Q'umarcaaj

The Spaniards perform their dance a second time, again performing a counter-clockwise circuit and ending with the diminished second round, Alvarado's solo, slow *vuelta* and signal to the musicians. Alvarado then announces his plans to send an embassy to Tekum offering terms for peace. When Carrillo steps out in front of Alvarado and volunteers for the mission, Alvarado asks Cardona to accompany him



Alvarado explains the terms of surrender to Carrillo and Cardona. 2012.

as well, so Cardona also steps out in front of Alvarado. Alvarado then steps out between them and begins pacing up and down the Spanish line, with Carrillo and Cardona on either side. While they pace as a trio, Alvarado privately explains the terms of surrender that the Ambassadors must deliver to Tekum, as noted earlier. Alvarado then returns to his place in line, while the two "ambassadors" stand



While the Ambassadors dance, Ajitz and Chiquito perform divination, with interference from the Spanish clowns. 2012

in front of him, salute, shake hands with Alvarado, and then depart dancing as the music begins.

While this conference has been taking place, a table and chair have been set up for Ajitz's divination, designed to affect the outcome of the conflict by casting spells on the Spaniards. As noted earlier, this divination is a pantomime not indicated in any text. At Joyabaj, this serious practice of divination is presented as a parody. As per the rule, Ajitz Grande and Chiquito

sit on opposite sides of the table along the central axis. However, the two Spanish clowns, Moreno and Quirijol, squat at the unoccupied sides of the divination table and interfere as much as possible in the

⁷ When the reports have finished, in performance I have seen Carillo again coming before Alvarado and speaking to him, but such a text that does not appear in either version current in Joyabaj.

divining process. They particularly enjoy playing with Ajitz's doll-like idol, sawing it with their swords, and they mime looking into his crystal. Despite constant interruptions, Ajitz may manage to do some of the requisite sorting of the red *tz'ite* seeds into piles associated with days whose auguries can be read. Ajitz also may demonstrate where his blood has jumped to give him other messages—usually he points to his leg or arm for this purpose—followed by the two Spanish clowns imitating these gestures in parody as if they too were diviners.



Ambassador looks through Ajitz's crystal. 2012.



Ajitz shows where his blood is jumping and the clown parodies him. 2010.

Carrillo and Cardona dance counter-clockwise side by side, their swords held out horizontally and crossed. After a little more than one round, they dance down the centre axis to the court, where they confront Rey K'iche' and the royal youths, and Rey K'iche' rises to receive them. As explained earlier, the text does not indicate that the Ambassadors visit Rey K'iche' and so he has no lines in this scene. However, at Joyabaj an attempt is made to integrate Rey K'iche' into the action by having the Malinches kneel before him to deliver, in spoken form, their usual song. In some performances Rey K'iche' pretended to be dialoguing with the Spaniards, a practice common at Momostenango.



The Ambassadors meet the Princes and Malinches. 2009.

13.4.3.4. Scene 4: Lookout and Quetzaltenango

The Ambassadors leave the court and resume their dance in the same direction and posture, while Ajitz and Chiquito clean up the divination seeds. When the Ambassadors reach the centre of the music side, they are able to see Ajitz and Chiquito at the divination table. Responding to the textual description of Ajitz's appearance as horrible, Carrillo walks around to Ajitz's side of the table and threatens Ajitz. Ajitz first appears wary but unafraid. As Chiquito has moved away from the table, Ajitz Grande will usually move Chiquito's stool to the side. As the dialogue of Carrillo and Cardona proceeds, Carrillo begins to attack. Ajitz moves his own chair to the other side as he rises rapidly in defence. Then, responding to the text in which Carrillo tells Ajitz to stop hopping (like a goat), Ajitz jumps over the table. The Ambassadors may respond in kind, jumping the table as first Carrillo and then Cardona chase after Ajitz. The number of jumps depends on the energy and agility of Ajitz: I have seen up to ten jumps by Ajitz, back and forth across the table. This jumping is interpreted by some participants as evidence of Ajitz's fears of being harmed by the Spaniards. As they tell Ajitz they must speak with Tekum, both Ambassadors flank Ajitz, each may grab an arm and drag him, an action in which the Spanish clowns may also become involved.



Ajitz jumps over table. 2012.



While Ajitz and Chiquito dance to Tekum, the Ambassadors act as sentries. 2012.

In response to the Ambassadors' demand to see Tekum, Ajitz stands on the court side of the table, across from the Ambassadors, and announces that he will go to seek Tekum's permission. With their hands on their hips, Ajitz Grande and Chiquito then dance counter-clockwise around the table and then diagonally to the Ajitz corner, where they turn left to begin a counter-clockwise circuit to directly confront Tekum. As pointed out by *maestro* Benito Ajanel, the proper step for this dance in Joyabaj (as in Cunén) is a hopping step, dancing a whole side hopping on one leg while swinging the other leg back and forth, but broken at each corner by a

vuelta. However, younger dancers at Joyabaj have shown themselves reluctant to follow this instruction. While Ajitz and Chiquito dance, the two Ambassadors act as sentries guarding the location: they

position themselves on the music side of the table, at either side of the dance ground, and each walks to the other side periodically, passing each other in the centre.

When Ajitz and Chiquito reach Tekum, they hop and deliver their message. Tekum reacts dramatically as usual, insisting that the ambassadors be both bound and blindfolded. Ajitz and Chiquito shake hands with Tekum and say “*Adios,*” then dance back clockwise, entering the central axis from the Ajitz (or sometimes Quirijol) corner, then turning right and dancing to the centre, making another counter-clockwise circumambulation around the table.



Ambassadors drag Ajitz. 2012.

When the music stops, Ajitz and Chiquito hop and then announce to the ambassadors the terms of their interview with Tekum. The Ambassadors confer among themselves, and when they decide it would be expedient to accede to Tekum’s conditions, they call Ajitz over to them. But they dramatize the words, “*Venga acá buen indio; Venga acá buen amigo*” (Come over here good Indian; come over here good friend) . Flanking Ajitz, they may each grab an arm, and violently drag him forward, assisted by the Spanish clowns. This kind of dramatization, in which pantomime transforms the subtext of antagonism into an overt text of conflict, is characteristic of Joyabaj.⁸

Now begins the long scene of preparing the Ambassadors for their interview with Tekum. Ajitz and Chiquito place their axes on the table, crossed in the centre, and also make sure the idol is placed between them, sitting upright. Naturally the Spanish clowns interfere and often turn the idol upside down or otherwise manipulate its posture. Then Ajitz and Chiquito begin to disarm the Ambassadors. With great struggle, Ajitz Grande steals Carrillo’s sword and Ajitz Chiquito steals Cardona’s sword, often, as at Cunén, on the third try. Ajitz tests the sharpness of Carrillo’s sword, even trying to saw Chiquito’s neck, or, a 2012 addition, sawing



Ajitz tests the sword’s sharpness by sawing at Chiquito’s leg. 2012.

⁸ In 2012 this action was postponed to a later point in the dance.

his leg. Finding the sword too dull to even penetrate the skin, he sharpens the weapon on the pavement. Chiquito makes the same sharpness tests of Cardona's sword on Ajitz Grande's neck or leg.

In previous years, as at Cunén, Ajitz then tests the straightness of the sword by looking down the shaft, but finds it intolerably bent. He then straightens the sword by positioning the point on the ground and applying pressure with his foot to the shaft. When he is satisfied with the sword quality he places the sword diagonally on the table, and then turns to enact the same sharpening and straightening procedure with Cardona's sword. Both swords are then laid in an X pattern on the table, on top of the crossed axes. In 2012 instead, Ajitz and Chiquito both stepped on the swords to purposely bend them before placing the swords on the table.

Once disarmed, the ambassadors can be bound. Ajitz Grande and Chiquito each take out bindings from their *morral*. In each case the binding consists of two ropes joined to a chain-type dog leash. Ajitz Grande binds one arm of each of the ambassadors, while Ajitz Chiquito does the same with their legs. These acts of binding are done with great struggle, as the Ambassadors resist and the Spanish clowns interfere mightily as long as they consider the action to be theatrically justifiable. Always the



Ajitz and Chiquito bind the Ambassadors. 2012.



Ajitz runs the *pañuelo* through his legs. 2011.

bindings are attached to Carrillo's left side and Cardona's right side. When the binding has been accomplished, Ajitz is holding the chain linking the Ambassadors' arms and Chiquito is holding the chain linking their legs. Ajitz then pulls the Ambassadors toward the table and hands the end of his chain to Chiquito who now controls both arms and legs of the Ambassadors, freeing Ajitz to take care of the blindfolds.

Ajitz takes a patterned cloth kerchief or *pañuelo* out of his *morral* (shoulder bag) for blindfolding Carrillo. The Spanish clowns attempt to steal the cloth and may succeed, playing keep-away for a while before letting Ajitz have it. Through these interferences, Ajitz readies the cloth for attaching to the Carrillo's face by ensuring it first smells sufficiently rank. He rubs it in the

armpits and crotches of most or all the K'iche' personages. If Rey K'iche' is taking a break, even he is called back to endure this treatment. Ajitz then pulls the *pañuelo* through his legs to ensure contact with both crotch and anus, while the Spanish clowns make a special effort to steal the cloth. He may then shove it in the face of one of the Spanish clowns who reacts with disgust to the smell. In 2012 various Ajitz performers added a new element, miming the blowing of their nose in the cloth and making sure the resulting mucous is spread throughout. Suitably disgusting at this point, the cloth can then be put over Carrillo's mask, though against vigorous interference from the Spanish clowns. Following standard convention, the cloth is tied over the mouth of the Carrillo's mask so that he can still see. As Ajitz does this, he speaks a line describing his actions.



Ajitz blows his nose into the *pañuelo*. 2012.

Then Ajitz performs the same procedures to render Cardona's 'blindfold' equally rank and as he attaches it speaks a second line. Ajitz then takes the end of his rope back from Chiquito and readjusts the ambassadors' position opposite the table from him. In this position of authority, Ajitz announces that he will play the *pito* (cane flute) and dance the ambassadors to Tekum, as usual pivoting from side to side as he recites these lines.



Ajitz and Chiquito guide Ambassadors to Tekum's palace. 2012.

As the music begins, Ajitz guides the ambassadors from the front, with Chiquito guiding from the rear. They circumambulate the table counter-clockwise then move down the diagonal axis to the Ajitz corner, where they turn left to begin a counter-clockwise circuit of the dance field to Tekum. The ambassadors do not dance but walk resistantly so that at times they must be pulled or dragged. The text at Joyabaj has a folk song called a *barreño* inserted here, and Ajitz sings it as he dances the ambassadors in to see Tekum.

When Ajitz Grande and Chiquito bring the ambassadors to Tekum they find him again in a deep sleep. Speaking to Tekum does no good. Ajitz shakes Tekum to wake him, to no avail. Ajitz checks for signs of life. He feels the quetzal in Tekum's headdress, then the two quetzals on Tekum's mask. He feels Tekum's heart to see if it still beats. Ajitz then jingles the coins in Tekum's plato, then realizing that Tekum is in too deep a sleep to notice, he mimes stealing the coins and putting them into his or



Ajitz touches the quetzal in Tekum's headdress. 2012.



Ajitz steals the coins from Tekum's *plato*. 2012.

Chiquito's *morral*. At last, Ajitz claps Tekum on the shoulder and loudly calls out his name. With this Tekum wakes with a start. As before when the Princes woke him, Tekum dashes down the dance ground, kneels, rubs his eyes and face, kneels and shades his eyes to look carefully to discover what had startled him. Ajitz again runs to Tekum and points out the ambassadors, drawing Tekum back to them.

After Ajitz hands Tekum the ends of the ropes that binds them, the Ambassadors demand a seat, provoking the usual angry response. However, the violence of this response is heightened at Joyabaj both in text and in action. In the Cantel contribution to this text, Tekum responds that if they were not emissaries he would have them whipped, while in additional text added in Joyabaj Tekum also says he would have had them burned—a 20th century addition that recalls yet inverts the historical fact that Alvarado burned the two K'iche' kings. In mime, Tekum violently shoves and slaps the Ambassadors, who respond in kind.



Tekum rejects the terms of surrender. 2009.

The Ambassadors then deliver the terms of surrender: conversion to Christianity and submission to the Spanish king or war, death and enslavement. Tekum reacts even more angrily this time, with many shoves, slaps, and *desafío* gestures with his flag. The ambassadors again respond with equal aggression. Both may make the sign meaning "burro" (ass) to insult the other.

Tekum hands the ropes back to Ajitz Grande and gives a speech to the

ambassadors, arguing that the K'iche' too are civilized with legal codes and universities, that he believes he has the military strength to defeat the invading forces, and if not then he will die in battle. Tekum asserts that his gods are powerful, and that he would prefer to die rather than give up his religion. He argues that the Spanish king must be crazy to expect him to surrender and concludes by saying he will meet the Spaniards on the battlefield. Then he dismisses the Ambassadors. Before leaving, Carrillo predicts that Tekum will be killed and his palace destroyed, and Tekum responds with incredulous laughter.

When this interview is concluded, Ajitz Grande and Chiquito again shake hands with Tekum and say “Adios” before leading the Ambassadors back. While Ajitz again sings a *barreño*, they dance clockwise circuits. Again from the Ajitz corner they dance to the centre of the ground and circumambulate the divination table counter-clockwise.

At the table, Ajitz and Chiquito first release the prisoners from their ropes. Ajitz then reaches to take off Carrillo’s blindfold and finds that the cloth has been infested with insects from the Spaniard’s unwashed body. Just touching it requires him to wipe the bugs off his hands and squash a few. Gingerly he removes the blindfold and lays the end on the ground,



Ajitz stomps out the bugs as the escape from the *pañuelo*. 2012.



Ajitz shoves the ambassadors. 2012.

stamping at the bugs as they try to crawl away, while the Spanish clowns take the opportunity again to try to steal the cloth. Eventually he puts the cloth back in his bag and goes through the same sequence with Cardona’s blindfold. When this is finished, Ajitz and Chiquito must return the ambassadors’ swords, but they make the Spaniards struggle to get them back. In a power reversal of their initial meeting, when he exclaims that “*Ya estais libres caballeros; vayanse con todos los diablos*” (You are free now gentlemen; go to the devil) Ajitz grabs both Spaniards and gives them a mighty shove to dismiss them. However, in 2012, when the earlier occasion for the Ambassadors dragging Ajitz was avoided, this dismissal came to represent a struggle between them that the Ambassadors appear to have won. Ajitz then stands on the opposite side of the table from the ambassadors to verbally send them off, repeating

Tekum's challenge to which they respond in words and pantomime by threatening to cut off his "tail" for a souvenir, furthering the association between Ajitz and the goat-like Devil.

13.4.3.5. Scene 5: Spanish Camp

The ambassadors, side by side and with swords crossed, dance counter-clockwise around the table and down the central axis to the court side, to begin a clockwise circuit back to Alvarado's position. When they arrive, they stand before Alvarado and report on the outcome of the audience with Tekum. As Carrillo and Cardona return to their places in the Spanish line, the remaining Spaniards, beginning with Portocarrero, are supposed to begin individual comments, though this sequence and the rest of Part II is usually skipped. When it is performed, each Spaniard in turn performs a *vuelta* with his neighbour walks up to Alvarado, salutes, says a few words to which Alvarado responds, salutes again, and returns to his place in line with another *vuelta*. Quirijol, being last, takes advantage of the opportunity to talk of his hopes to get a Native wife to care for him. Alvarado then steps out and paces along the Spanish ranks as he delivers a speech in which he organizes the battle strategy and the part each of his captains will play in it. The Spaniards respond in unison to his exhortation.

13.4.4. Part III

13.4.4.1. Scene 1: Quetzaltenango

This scene begins with a dance of the *Caciques*, led by Tekum. The dance is clockwise and ends as usual with the diminished second round, Tekum's solo in the centre, slow rotation and signal to the musicians. Then Tekum begins pacing along the ranks of *Caciques* and speaks to them. In a speech heavily rewritten from the Cantel source, but similar in content, Tekum articulates his anger at Alvarado's ultimatum and the absurdity of surrendering his religion. He explains that has decided to send Ajitz and Tzunun to Rey K'iche', advising the sovereign that the Spanish terms have been refused and war will follow.

Tekum stops in front of Tzunun and asks him to undertake the embassy along with Ajitz. Tekum returns to his place at the head of the *Cacique* line and Tzunun steps out in front of him, receiving the flag from Tekum as a sign of his authority to carry this message. Tzunun calls out Ajitz, who steps out from his position in line to respond. Their conversation concerns Ajitz's cowardly unwillingness to attempt the journey, but the meaning of this dialogue is ignored as in fact Ajitz does go, along with Chiquito.

13.4.4.2. Scene 2: Q'umarcaaj

Ajitz and Chiquito lead Tzunun in a counter-clockwise dance to Q'umarcaaj, turning down the central axis from the centre of the music side to properly approach the court.⁹ As Tzunun kneels before the Rey K'iche', Ajitz and Chiquito as usual face in the opposite direction to guard from attack. The clowns



Tzunun kneels in greeting to Rey K'iche' while Ajitz looks for danger. 2009.

of course do their best to disrupt this grouping.

Ajitz has no text in the scene between Tzunun and Rey K'iche', because according to the text he never went. So it is only Tzunun who addresses Rey K'iche'. After Rey K'iche' asks Tzunun to rise, they may embrace and turn in a complete circle. Declaiming the text, Tzunun advises Rey K'iche' of Tekum's decision. Rey K'iche' virtually abdicates in terror at this

point, saying that Tekum is now king since he was already the heir. Tzunun responds to Rey K'iche' that he will reign much longer while the Malinches and Princes try to comfort him. Then, with a handshake, Tzunun takes his leave.

13.4.4.3. Scene 3: Quetzaltenango

Ajitz and Chiquito again lead Tzunun in dancing back counter-clockwise to report to Tekum. As Tzunun reports, he hands Tekum the flag. Ajitz and Chiquito also report, hopping at beginning and end. After Tekum invites the travelers to rest from their journey, Ajitz predicts the sequence of battles that will occur.



Ajitz predicts the sequence of battles that will occur. 2012.

13.4.5. Part IV:

⁹ One would expect a clockwise dance direction here rather than counter-clockwise, which takes the dancers past the *Cacique* line, a move that is normally avoided. I suspect the reason is that formerly Tzunun would have danced to Ajitz's position (as sometimes occurs at Momostenango), and then Tzunun, Ajitz, and Chiquito would have departed from the Ajitz position, which requires counter-clockwise.

13.4.5.1. Scene 1: From Quetzaltenango to the Battlefield at El Pinal

Although this scene is often shortened irregularly, the text provides the complete sequence. The *Caciques* perform the usual clockwise circuit dance, with diminished second round and Tekum solo. Tekum then steps out, paces in front of his vassals, and delivers a powerful speech that begins “*Hecho un mar de confusiones*” (Made a sea of confusion). Although this speech begins with the same quatrain that begins it in earlier texts, the rest is a rewriting developed in Cantel. Rather than narrate a dream of his death in battle as in the earlier form, Tekum envisions the battle in more general terms. In alarm he cries out in romantic-nationalistic 20th century sentiments, “*Despierta, patria, despierta,*” (Awake, fatherland, awake).



“Hecho un mar de confusiones.” 2012.

The speech then finishes with the same sentiment as in the earlier versions, that it is better to die courageously in battle than to withdraw in despair (as Rey K'iche' has done). The *Caciques* each individually respond to Tekum, and he to them. Though the next part is supposed to take place on the battlefield, they do not dance again, and instead Tekum immediately delivers a short exhortation and the *Caciques* respond in unison.

13.4.5.2. Scene 2: From the Spanish Camp to the Battlefield at El Pinal

The Spaniards begin this scene with a counter-clockwise dance in the usual form ending with the diminished second round and Alvarado's solo in the centre. After he turns the *vuelta* and signals the musicians to stop, Alvarado speaks with Carrillo about the organization of forces. Alvarado then gives his main speech of the scene and each of the Spanish captains then reports individually to Alvarado, ending with a more extended speech by Quirijol in which his demeanour turns from valour to cowardice. As with the previous scene, there is no clear transition to the battlefield, where Alvarado now delivers a short exhortation and the Spaniards respond in unison. Peculiar to the Cantel/Joyabaj text, Tekum is given another short exhortation to his troupes after Alvarado has finished.

13.4.5.3. Scene 3: Battle

The battle segment then begins. The battle is normally divided into eight segments, together lasting 90 minutes on average. Each of the eight segments begins with a choreographed skirmish. However, two of the segments, the fifth and eighth, continue with an extemporized scene that results in the

wounding of a leader: first Alvarado then Tekum. Each of the skirmishes is separated by short speeches by the two leaders, first Tekum then Alvarado. Most of the texts involve each leader addressing his own troops, but in performance they are always confronting and challenging each other, with repeated *desafíos* (scraping their weapons against the ground) and *cruzadas* (running diagonally and leaping while turning and striking weapons).

Following the dialogue between the leaders, each encounter or skirmish begins with one side crouching in defense and the other side advancing toward them, to the accompaniment of a repeated figure on the *chirimía* and *tambor* that is not a full *son*. The Spanish, who are the first to crouch, hold their swords out vertically in front with the point resting on the ground. The two sides alternate in this positioning as the skirmishes progress.



Opposing sides advance and retreat three times. 2009.

When the music starts, the advancing or offensive side moves toward the crouching or defensive side. As they arrive, the crouching group rises.¹⁰ Then in parallel lines both groups move to the opposite side, with those that first advanced now dancing backwards. They dance forwards again, then backwards, and then forwards. In particular harmony with the incessant drum beat, both Spaniards and

¹⁰ Both groups dance the same step in this advance-and-withdraw alternation. For the advancing group, as the right foot moves forward, the right arm is raised and extended while the left foot moves behind the right, turning the dancer toward the left. At the same time, both legs are flexed. The left foot then moves forward while extending the left arm, as the right foot moves behind, turning the dancer toward the right. The withdrawing group takes two steps back with a pause, flex, and turn of the body.

Caciques perform a balletic step with a swaying gait, to which the *Caciques* add a rotation of their body from side to side. Each time the K'iche' move forward, Tekum urges on his troops with “*A las armas mis valientes campeones*” (To arms, my valiant champions), and each time the Spanish move forward Alvarado inspires his troops with “*Guerra mis soldados*” (War, my soldiers).

At the conclusion of these advances and withdrawals, with the music continuing, the leader of the side that first advanced in offence will now flee in retreat, leading his troops in a U-turn and running in a spiral followed by the opposing leader and his troops. They return to their respective sides, and because both leaders are followed by their troops, it means that the



Spaniards chase the K'iche'. 2012.

side that led the retreat is now in reverse order, with the leader at the court end. This positions the two leaders on opposite ends of a diagonal bisecting the dance ground, in preparation for the *cruzadas*. When Tekum leads the retreat it is counter-clockwise and finishes at the court side, so the *cruzada* diagonal will be between the Ajitz and Alvarado corners. When Alvarado leads the retreat it is clockwise and he ends up at the court side, so the *cruzada* diagonal will be between the Quirijol and Tekum corners.



Tekum and Alvarado jump and clash weapons. 2009.

In this diagonal opposition, and with music still playing, the two leaders perform *cruzadas* in both directions, three times. These *cruzadas* may alternate with the *desafíos*, drawing a line or arc on the ground with the point of their weapon. Because the number of *cruzadas* accomplished is odd, each leader ends near the head of the opposing line. Then begins what I call the serial *cruzadas*. Each leader first challenges the second in the opposing line to engage in a *cruzada*, which brings that fighter out into the dance area. A second *cruzada* moves him back into the line, and the leader moves on to the next fighter. In this way, each leader moves down the rank of fighters and then back up again to the starting point. After completing these serial *cruzadas*, the two leaders again perform three *cruzadas* with each other which again may alternate with *desafíos*. Again, because the number of *cruzadas* is

odd, this second set returns the leaders to the position at which they started the *cruzadas*. At this point one of the leaders will signal the musicians to stop, so that Tekum and then Alvarado can deliver their speeches punctuated with *desafíos* and *cruzadas*. In some cases, particularly the speeches before the fourth skirmish, additional mime is incorporated, including drum beat, military march, and attempts to dampen the drum.



Desafío. 2009.

When each set of speeches has finished, and it is time to begin a new skirmish, the side that lead the retreat and thereby reversed their direction must return to their normal positions, doing *vueltas* in pairs both before and after making this move. As they finish the *vueltas*, they immediately kneel so that the opposing side may become the aggressors. In this way, aggressors and defenders alternate with each skirmish, conforming to the balanced symmetry that underlies the Conquest Dance.

The fifth and eighth segments are more elaborate because they narrate, through mime, a near-fatal wounding of Alvarado and the fatal wounding of Tekum. These segments begin with the same choreographed advances and withdrawals, except that both sides reverse their order, placing the leaders at the court end rather than music end.¹¹ Then, instead of the circular retreat, each leader moves to the opposite side and moves their opponents into the sidelines with threatening gestures of provocation. In these wounding rounds, only the leaders and their paired clowns participate. Of these, Ajitz and Chiquito may fight with their whips or their axes. Each wounding round generally takes about thirty minutes. However, the best dancers of these two roles hope that they will energize each other and greatly extend the length of each wounding round, building up greater drama through interactive mime. Unlike other improvised pantomimes, these wounding rounds are accompanied throughout by the musicians.



Tekum provokes the Spanish soldiers. 2009.

¹¹ The leaders may also choose this orientation in the skirmish before the wounding round as well.



Ajitz sharpens Tekum's weapon. 2012.

follow, interspersed with strikes on the victim's body, which his clowns work to cure by miming the rubbing of saliva on the affected part.

Though lacking either dance or text, these pantomimed wounding rounds do loosely follow a set series of actions, and many of these can be repeated to draw out the drama. The wounding sequence usually begins with a series of *cruzadas*. Then for the leader who will be doing the wounding (Tekum in the Alvarado round and Alvarado in the Tekum round), his clowns mime the sharpening of his weapon. This act has recently been followed by the clowns helping direct the weapon toward the adversary. More *cruzadas*



Ajitz and Chiquito show Tekum that Alvarado is hiding behind other Spaniards. 2012.



Rey K'iche' seeks to protect Tekum. 2012.

As the victim becomes weaker and weaker with repeated blows, he seeks to hide in turn behind each of the four groups that occupy the four sides (Music, Spaniard, Court, *Cacique*). I have seen this done in a loose order as well as strictly, with Alvarado hiding first behind the Spaniards and then moving clockwise through the other three to finish the circuit, and Tekum hiding first behind the *Caciques* then moving counter-clockwise to the other three to finish his circuit. The pattern of hiding for each position is similar. The victim crouches behind those who remain on the side chosen. His clowns stand in front of them to block the enemy's view of the victim. As the opposing leader searches for the victim, one of the hiding victim's clowns will attack the leader with *cruzadas*, heroically defending his leader. Soon, however, the opposing leader's clowns find the hiding leader and point him out to their superior. The opposing leader then directly attacks and flushes out the victim leader so that he must seek another hiding place. Adding to the narrative, in 2012 it

became standard for certain hiding places to be refused by the opposing side: thus Tekum could not hide behind the Spanish lines, nor could Alvarado successfully hide behind the *Cacique* line or the court. On the other hand, when Tekum went to hide behind the court, the Rey K'iche', remaining in character as Tekum's father, sought to protect him by shooing away the Spanish clowns and by embracing Tekum. With this shift away from freedom of hiding places also came more emphasis on hiding with the neutral musicians. Both Alvarado and Tekum would pretend to be musicians in order to be less conspicuous to the searching enemy clowns. Both leaders "played" their weapon as if a *chirimía*, and on one occasion Tekum pretended his *plato* and sceptre were drumsticks.



Tekum attacks Alvarado. 2012.

Once there is nowhere left to hide, the *cruzadas* and woundings begin again. Now the victim is so badly hurt, despite further curing with saliva, that he is desperate, so he kneels and pleads with the opponent for mercy. One of his clowns will again fight the opposing leader in his place to give him time to regain his strength.



Alvarado attacks Tekum. 2009.



Alvarado begs for mercy. 2009.



Tekum begs for mercy. 2009.

More *cruzadas*, strikes on the victim, and curings follow for as long as the two leaders wish to continue. Throughout these sequences, the attacking leader and his clowns will often make hand signs signifying that "it's all over," or they might mime the action of digging the victim's grave.

Finally, and always at a time when the victim is at a position in front of the court, the opposing leader will jump on the back of the victim,

joined then by his two clowns. This *golpe* (blow) stops the action and music entirely and ends the round. Two subordinates then immediately take the arms of the wounded leader and support him in a slow counter-clockwise circuit around the dance ground.

Apart from these many repeated features, the two wounding rounds and their aftermaths also differ in some important ways that may now be detailed.



Ajtiz fights Alvarado to give Tekum a chance to rest. 2009.



Ajtiz works to heal Tekum's battle wounds. 2012.



Tekum seriously wounds Alvarado. 2009.



Alvarado mortally wounds Tekum. 2012



K'iche' celebrate presumed victory as the wounded Alvarado is led away by his officers. 2011.

In the fifth segment, as soon as the *golpe* has been delivered to Alvarado, the *Caciques* immediately begin a dance of victory. This is a clockwise dance of their standard step finishing with the usual diminished second round and Tekum solo in the centre. At the same time, Alvarado's clowns take each of his arms and support their stumbling leader. Marching him counter-clockwise, complete with *vuelatas* at the corners, they stop at the Alvarado corner where they will cure him of his terrible wound.



Spanish clowns heal Alvarado's leg wound. 2009

As noted, the wounding of Alvarado is an innovation in performance that is not indicated in the text, but does represent a logical interpretation of Alvarado's mid-battle statement that Tekum has left him horseless, a detail derived from the narration of his duel with Alvarado in three of the 16th century K'iche' *títulos*, in which Tekum decapitates Alvarado's horse. Also noted earlier is the historical resonance of showing Alvarado to be wounded in his leg. Alvarado's clowns cure him in Maya fashion, miming that they are spitting on their hand and rubbing this hand on the wound. With each application Alvarado gains more mobility in his leg, until he finds he can put full weight on it and flex it completely.



Ajitz encourages Tekum. 2012.

Once Alvarado's leg is fully cured and the *Cacique* dance has finished and the music stopped, the most important of the speeches by the two leaders are delivered. Tekum laments the great number of his soldiers that have been killed and fears that he has lost the battle, but Ajitz steps out of the line to face Tekum and hops before

speaking a few lines designed to encourage him.¹² Tekum resumes by saying he—presumably in the form of his *nawal*—has risen into the air three times already and seen their forces. Tekum kneels at the point where he says Alvarado has already subjugated many peoples. Alvarado now speaks. Lamenting

¹² Ajitz's interjection appears in only one of the two versions of the text used in Joyabaj.



Alvarado asks Portocarrero for his lance. 2009.

that Tekum has killed his horse, Alvarado asks to borrow Portocarrero's lance. This lance is the flag of Spain, which Alvarado now uses as his weapon.

The wounding round for Tekum is similar until its climax. Exhausted and stumbling from his many wounds, Tekum loses his weapons, one by one. He first loses his flag, then loses his *plato* or shield and finally his sceptre. Rather than just dropping these, Tekum throws each towards Ajitz and Chiquito to keep the Spanish clowns from stealing them.

Then Tekum fights Alvarado bare-handed. In 2012,

however, some additional elements were added and became regular. When Tekum had lost the flag, Tekum jingled the coins towards the Spaniards on one occasion, and Alvarado in particular on another occasion, presumably offering money as a ransom for his life. Then, when Tekum had lost the flag and *plato*, he tucked his sceptre into his belt, and Alvarado at the same time tucked his flag into his belt, so that both fought and performed *cruzadas* bare-handed. Alvarado and Tekum subsequently used their weapons until Tekum's sceptre was also "lost."



Tekum throws his sceptre. 2011.



While the wounded Tekum is supported, Alvarado leads his roops to occupy Tekum's palace. 2012.

As with the Alvarado wounding round, Tekum's final blow comes when he is positioned near the court. Alvarado and his clowns fall upon him from behind and Alvarado delivers the fatal blow. The *Caciques* rush to support Tekum, standing him in front of the court but facing the music side. Immediately the Spaniards begin a counter-clockwise victory dance, with sheathed swords and hands held on their hips.

The Spaniards complete the circuit by coming around behind the *Cacique* group, ending up right in front of Tekum. Then Alvarado clicks his heels and takes out his sword to salute as a signal to the musicians to play a march. As the other Spaniards take out their swords and rest them against their

right shoulders, Alvarado the leads his troops in a clockwise march that puts the Spaniards in the right direction to occupy the *Cacique* side, representing Tekum's palace in Quetzaltenango. As the Spanish

dance up the *Cacique* side they all remain there except Alvarado who performs the standard diminished circuit and solo, except that since he is marching there is no *vuelta* at the finish.



Tekum is led away from the battlefield. 2009.

13.4.5.4. Scene 4: Tekum's Funeral; Battlefield, Q'umarcaaj, and Burial Place

When the Spanish dance has ended, Tzunun leads a funeral march in which the mortally wounded Tekum is led counter-clockwise (with *vueltas*) up the Spanish side and finishing at the centre of the music side. During this march, the *Caciques* hold

their *platos* horizontally and vibrate them to produce a steady, mournful hum that enhances the dirge played by the musicians. At the music side, Tekum sits and softly delivers a Cantel-originated death speech, bidding farewell to his sumptuous palace. While doing so, Tekum takes off his headdress, understood as the crown of the heir apparent, and hands it to Tzunun. This is also the point where Tzunun decides to end the battle, submit to the Spanish conditions, and take



Ajitz's farewell to Tekum. 2012.

Tekum's body to the court at Q'umarcaaj. In another Cantel addition, Ajitz bids Tekum farewell and predicts the raising of a monument to his memory in Xelajuj. Although Tekum is now dead, since a coffin is no longer used at Joyabaj he will be led by the *Caciques* in two more funeral marches.



Tzunun, carrying Tekum's headdress, escorts the deceased Tekum to the palace of Rey K'iche'. 2012.

Tzunun, carrying Tekum's headdress, leads the second funeral procession in a counter-clockwise circuit that continues with movement down the central axis to

the court at Q'umarcaaj, with the *Caciques* supporting the deceased Tekum. Arm in arm, Ajitz and Chiquito stagger behind, wailing in grief while fending off the comic disruptions of the Spanish clowns. On reaching the court, Tzunun kneels to address Rey K'iche' and hands him Tekum's headdress. Taking the headdress, Rey K'iche' circumambulates Tekum and the *Cacique* group counter-clockwise as he recites his heartfelt farewell to his son and heir. Unable to bear the sight any longer, Rey K'iche' asks Tzunun to bury Tekum immediately. Rey K'iche' then hands the headdress back to Tzunun, who leads a third funeral procession counter-clockwise back to the centre of the music side. There Tekum sits again, and since this is his burial, supposedly on Cerro El Baúl overlooking Quetzaltenango, he takes his headdress and leaves the dance ground.



The grieving Rey K'iche' carries Tekum's headdress as he circles the corpse. 2009.

Once this 'burial' is complete, the *Caciques* resume their usual, more active dance step and return counter-clockwise to the court at Q'umarcaaj, entering along the central axis. The *Caciques* arrange themselves to the left side of the Rey K'iche'. After the Malinches' mournful song, not sung and rarely even recited at Joyabaj, Rey K'iche' decides he must submit to the Spanish and sends the two Princes to invite them to come to his court to seal the peace.

13.4.5.5. Scene 5: Quetzaltenango



Carrillo appoints Quirijol as sentry. 2012.

The Princes begin dancing in a clockwise circuit to travel from Q'umarcaaj to Quetzaltenango. As noted above, if the performers have neglected the sequence in which Carrillo appoints Quirijol as sentry, it is accomplished during the Princes' dance. In some cases it is actually repeated, perhaps because this is a new location (Quetzaltenango) in which a sentry is needed. Quirijol is understood to now be stationed—as Ajitz was in Part II—outside the Spanish headquarters, formerly Tekum's Quetzaltenango palace. The Princes' clockwise circuit dance takes them directly to Quirijol's station at the end of the Spanish line, formerly the Ajitz corner. When the Princes express their desire to see Alvarado, Quirijol guides them in a counter-clockwise dance to directly approach Alvarado's position (formerly the Tekum position). Quirijol, as a

lookout or sentry, dances with his hands alternately raised to shield his eyes, a gesture suggesting carefully looking into the distance that would be appropriate to a sentry. Quirijol then presents the Princes to Alvarado and returns to his position in line. During a dialogue in which Alvarado also asks what has happened to Tekum, he accepts the Princes' invitation. Each of the Spaniards declares their support, finishing with Quirijol again fantasizing about a Native wife. Alvarado then confirms the journey and, after performing a *vuelta* with the Princes, organizes his captains to line up behind him and the Princes along the musician side so that they can dance counter-clockwise to the court, just as Tekum had done in the first part when the Princes came to fetch him.



Quirijol makes the "reconnoiter" gesture as he leads the Princes to Alvarado. 2009.



Quirijol presents the Princes to Alvarado. 2009

13.4.5.6. Scene 6: *Q'umarcaaj*

The Princes then lead the Spaniards in a dance counter-clockwise and down the central axis into the court. Arriving at the court, the Spaniards bow to Rey K'iche' and then rise. Alvarado and Rey K'iche' deliver words of greetings and embrace, sometimes turning in a circle. The Spaniards now move to Rey K'iche's right, leaving only Rey K'iche' and Alvarado in the centre. Alvarado and Rey K'iche' have a private dialogue, for which they may squat as Tekum and Rey K'iche' did in the first part. Rey K'iche' narrates a dream to Alvarado in which the Holy Ghost advised him to convert, and he ends by requesting baptism. While Rey K'iche' remains kneeling, and the rest of the *Caciques* kneel, Alvarado rises and with a hand gesture baptizes all of the K'iche'.



Rey K'iche' relates his dream to Alvarado. 2012.

All, that is, except Ajitz and Chiquito who attempt to avoid baptism. According to Don Chico, Ajitz and Chiquito resist because they are in league with the devil, yet they must still be baptized. Perhaps another explanation, no longer current, is that the priest-diviners resist because they were servants of



Alvarado baptizes the *Caciques*. 2009.

Tekum who preferred to die rather than change his religion. Tekum's actions underscore the ambivalence involved in this pantomime. Tekum is admired for his courageous stand at the same time that he is considered to have made the wrong choice. But a more important explanation concerns the shift in Ajitz's character that allows him to continually demonstrate resistance against outside authority that resonates fully with current circumstances, as it has done perhaps for centuries. Despite their resistance, the Spanish clowns capture and bring the priest-diviners back to be baptized.

After a speech by Quirijol (usually eliminated), Ajitz declaims his rejection of his former religion in favour of Christianity.

Alvarado, after bowing to Rey K'iche' and performing a *vuelta* with Carrillo, leads the Spaniards in a counter-clockwise dance to the centre of the music side where the Spaniards form a lateral line. Alvarado then crouches as he shades his eyes, then leads the Spanish line toward the court. There he crouches and again shades his eyes, after which the Spanish line dances backward to the music side. For the third time Alvarado crouches and shades his eyes, then leads the Spanish line a final time to the court side.¹³



Alvarado performs the reconoiter gesture as he leads the Spanish soldiers back to the royal court. 2009.

This dance and gesture are not supported by the text. When I questioned Don Chico (Francisco Ordoñez) on its meaning, he interpreted the sequence as a reconnaissance with Alvarado ensuring that he has actually reached the capital and K'iche' ruler. I suggest that initially it may have meant a reconnaissance of K'iche' territory, since only the capital had been investigated and converted. Such a

¹³ Alvarado may alternate hands in the eye-shading gesture, which also requires him to shift the flag from hand to hand.

meaning would be an ironic reversal of the historical events concerning Alvarado's military action in the Q'umarcaaj region. After he burned the two K'iche' kings and then burned the city, Alvarado's troops and their Kaqchikel allies scoured the countryside to round up K'iche' who had fled the capital in order to brand and enslave them.

On a later occasion I questioned the *maestro*, Don Benito, on the meaning of this dance sequence. Don Benito responded that it means the Spanish and K'iche' are equal now as they are Christian, and that the story is now finished. Don Benito was actually describing the closing dance, and in fact as it is now performed at Joyabaj, this Spanish dance is continuous with a standard closing dance in both music and movement.

13.4.6. Closing dance



Closing dance: First Prince leads *Caciques* while Rey K'iche' leads Spaniards. 2012.

As the Spanish reach the court side the final time in the dance just described, they line up to the right of the Rey K'iche', thus forming a continuous line of Spaniards and K'iche'. After Rey K'iche' performs a *vuelta* with Alvarado, Rey K'iche' leads him and the other Spaniards in a clockwise circuit. Simultaneously the First Prince leads the rest of the K'iche' in

a counter-clockwise circuit. The two lines pass each other on the music side and continue on down towards the court side. On reaching the court side, the two lines reform into a single lateral line, with Rey K'iche' and Alvarado at the centre, to perform the usual dedication or honouring sequence. The line dances forward to the music, backwards to the court, forwards and backwards again, then forwards to the music side to finish. When the music stops, Rey K'iche' and then Alvarado recite their dedications to the local patron, the Virgin of the Assumption, and the rest respond in unison.

At this point a *bomba* is set off to end the presentation. If this is a morning performance, dancers and musicians process to the next venue and break for lunch. Some dancers will change clothing so that their alternates can take the costumes and dance in the afternoon. If it is an afternoon performance, they will process back to the *posada* to change out of their costumes.



Closing Dance: single line. 2012.

13.5. Discussion: *Furiosos Leones*

Don Chico once explained to me that he gears his interpretation of Tekum's role as an embodiment of the statement Tekum makes in his "*Ya mis Caciques aliados*" speech near the end of Part I. In this speech, Tekum encourages his *Caciques* by saying that they will come out to meet the Spanish squadrons "*como furiosos leones*" (like furious lions). And he succeeds, since no other performer matches Don Chico's intensity in this role.

But Don Chico's vivid portrayal of the courageous Tekum is not out of character with the rest of the dance or its context in Joyabaj. Intensity is the term that I have relied on most often to express the flavour and impact of the Conquest dance in this municipio. For all major characters, the style of performance is intense. All leading dancers act out their speeches with dramatic gestures, and the interchanges of Alvarado and Tekum in particular are punctuated by rapid *desafío* gestures and spectacular *cruzadas*. This drama is beautifully set up at the Spanish Entrada when Tekum dramatically challenges everything that Alvarado has to say, in an interchange that I have only found at Joyabaj. Further, interactions between the Spanish Ambassadors and both Ajitz and Tekum are overtly violent. The Ambassadors' meeting with Tekum is often the most violent episode, as they slap, strike, and shove each other, sometimes to the point of losing balance. Even the clowns' antics are delivered with fervour, tireless energy and inexhaustible humour. Their slapstick humour also provides an intense contrast with the tragic drama centering around Tekum, who in Joyabaj more than any other locality is presented as a toweringly heroic figure. It was earlier noted that the colours used in both costumes and masks are particularly intense and thus dramatic. This dramatic aspect extends to the extreme racialized contrast between the colours of *Cacique* and Spanish masks. The logistics of performance are also intense. Joyabaj's text is more than twice as long as that of Cunén, and it is performed in full, twice per day. If that were not difficult enough, the heat in Joyabaj in August is intense, and performers are often dancing in the street or plaza where there is virtually no shade. So dancers suffer with the

heavy masks and costumes for hours in the blazing sun. For the main performers who alternate, this means 5–6 hours of such exposure, and when a dancer is needed to perform in both presentations in a single day, the amount doubles. Fervent devotion to the patron saint, the Virgen del Tránsito, motivates this purgatory.

Despite the fact that Cunén uses the shortest and most traditional text of the four communities studied, while Joyabaj uses the longest and one of the most heavily modified texts, dancing the *Baile de la Conquista* in these two communities shares several performance conventions. Some of these are also shared in Nebaj, which may suggest regional intercommunication, perhaps through an early exchange of *maestros*. For example, in all three the battle is divided into equal and parallel halves, with Alvarado seriously wounded in the first half, to the extent that Tekum leads the K'iche' in a victory dance, and with Tekum mortally wounded in the second half. Conventions for group dances are also similar, with a modified second circuit followed by the leader's solo, and with the hopping dance for Ajitz and Chiquito to ask Tekum for permission to bring the Ambassadors to an audience with him. All three communities also share the attempts by clowns to dampen the drum when it is playing for the other side. Apart from such conventions, these communities also share a closer integration with *cofradías*, resulting in rotation of performance between the church and several *cofradías*. A further result is that there is no platform for the royal court, and the musicians are situated on the opposite side from the court. In terms of costume, Joyabaj, Cunén and Nebaj all share the use of a specialized costume for the Malinches that includes a feature hiding the face, and all share the attachment of scarves to the attributes they hold.